

SCHOOL BOND ELECTIONS IN IOWA:
AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS,
STRATEGIES, AND POLICIES
THAT INFLUENCE OUTCOMES

A Dissertation
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

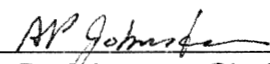
by Kevin C. Brummer
May 1999

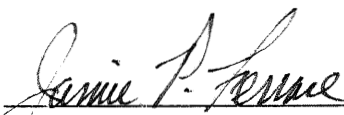
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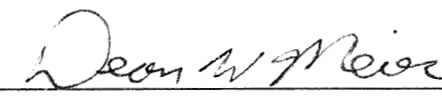
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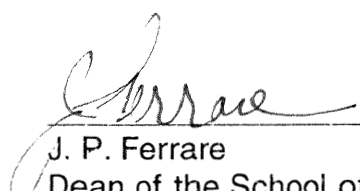
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SCHOOL BOND ELECTIONS IN IOWA: AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS, STRATEGIES, AND POLICIES THAT INFLUENCE OUTCOMES

An abstract of a Dissertation by
Kevin C. Brummer
May 1999
Drake University
Chair: A. P. Johnston

The Problem. The problem of this study was to identify and analyze: (a) selected social, political, and economic factors, (b) successful strategies used in school bond elections, and (c) influential policies related to school bond elections.

Procedures. Questions were developed, and interviews were conducted with a school board member, the superintendent, and the citizens' committee chairperson in four school districts chosen on the basis of the cost of the bond issue per student and the percentage the bond issue represented of the assessed valuation of the district, along with consultants from the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Association of School Boards.

Findings. Aging buildings and the inability to present the educational program were the major reasons for bond issues. Listening to the voters, the campaign committee, the level of community involvement, and a unified school board were crucial to passing the bond issue. The most successful strategy was communicating with the public in as many ways as possible. Laws impacting bond issues were property tax funding for bond issues, the campaign ethics laws, and two ballot questions for exceeding a tax rate of \$2.70.

Conclusions. Ten conclusions were drawn, including: the importance of listening, the need for vigorous leadership, and the necessity for well-coordinated plans.

Recommendations. Legislators could consider changing the method of funding bond issues and changing the laws requiring two ballot questions when the proposed tax levy exceeded \$2.70. Additional research could be done to study strategies in school districts of other sizes, school districts that have failed to pass bond issues, school districts in growth patterns, school districts that passed a bond issue on the first attempt, and states with the simple majority vote required for passage.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A major responsibility of school boards was to identify trends and emerging issues within the local school district. Communities were changing constantly for any of several reasons such as businesses moving in or out, population shifts, or economic swings. School board members had the responsibility to make sure that students in the ever-changing communities had the opportunity to achieve to the best of their ability in a safe environment which was conducive to learning.

An emerging issue which was reaching a critical level on a nationwide basis dealt with school facilities. "There is not enough Super Glue to hold some of our buildings together for 20 years," according to Benjamin Canada (1997), superintendent of the Atlanta Public Schools. Canada's statement reflected one of the factors which had brought about an increase in bond issues for new school facilities: crumbling buildings. In general, bond issues had been presented with increasing frequency in the 1990s for one or more of the following reasons: aging buildings which are structurally unsound; increasing technology needs; or increasing student enrollment.

Constitutionally, education was the responsibility of the state. However, provision of school facilities was often the responsibility of the local school district. Federal and state mandates that dealt with school facilities often were not accompanied by funding to implement the mandates. Thus, school districts

were usually forced to use local tax resources to meet requirements imposed by other governmental agencies, and this frequently resulted in inequities, according to the tax valuation wealth of the local district.

Several reasons were identified for the problems associated with school facilities. Linda Frazier (1993) cited the following examples:

1. Twenty percent of American schools are at least fifty years old, and about forty-three percent were built during the 1950s and 1960s.
2. Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit each need more than \$1 billion to repair and replace school buildings. New York alone needs \$17 billion.
3. While many of the nation's oldest schools are in cities, rural areas also have great needs. In Bamberg County, South Carolina, for example, one-third of the teaching stations are housed in trailers.
4. Florida will need over 800 new schools by the year 2003.
5. Texas required more than 37,000 additional teaching stations, at a cost of \$2.1 billion, to meet the thirty-five percent increase in school enrollment for 1996.
6. School facility requirements for California for the decade ending in 2000 total nearly \$34 billion, including new classrooms, modernization, and deferred maintenance.

In 1995 the General Accounting Office (GAO) released a survey report, *School Facilities: Condition of America's Schools*, which further illustrated the

crisis level of the physical condition of school facilities across the country.

Results of the survey indicated that elementary and secondary schools in the nation needed about \$112 billion in repairs and upgrades to restore them to good condition. Even though two-thirds of the schools were reported to be in good overall condition, about 14 million students attended schools in need of extensive repair or replacement. Schools which were indicated as being in adequate shape faced major building feature problems, such as plumbing or roof needs. Nearly 60% of the schools reported at least one major building element in disrepair, such as leaky roofs or crumbling walls, and most of these schools had multiple problems. More than half of the schools reported at least one environmental problem, such as inadequate ventilation, poor heating or lighting, or poor physical security. Forty-six percent of the schools lacked even the basic electrical wiring to support computers, modems, and modern communication technology (GAO, 1995a). The information in Table 1 depicted the number of schools and students affected by the problems identified in the report.

The American Society of Civil Engineers went on record in 1997 supporting an increased emphasis on public school construction and maintenance to ensure a sound future for America's 42 million school children. The ASCE rationale was stated in the organization's Policy Statement:

The neglect of public school buildings carries a high price, not only for the nation's students, but for the nation. The number of children in

Table 1		
Students Attending Schools With Less-Than-Adequate Physical Conditions April 1994 to December 1994		
Building Feature	Number of Schools	Estimate of Students Affected
Roofs	21,100	11,916,000
Framing, floors, foundations	13,900	7,247,000
Exterior walls, finishes, windows, doors	20,500	11,524,000
Interior finishes, trims	18,600	10,408,000
Plumbing	23,100	12,254,000
Heating, ventilation, air conditioning	28,100	15,456,000
Electrical power	20,500	11,034,000
Electrical lighting	19,500	10,837,000
Life safety codes	14,500	7,630,000
Source: General Accounting Office, 1995a		

substandard schools continues to grow as the money to maintain, repair and replace this critical infrastructure investment shrinks. A third of America's children are trying to learn and prepare for the challenges of adulthood in buildings that are overcrowded, poorly ventilated, structurally unsafe and lacking adequate plumbing or lighting. If our schools can not make the grade, neither can our students.

School districts in Iowa have mirrored the national trends in recent years. Aging facilities, population growth in certain portions of the state, and the need to meet the ever-changing educational challenges led to over 70 bond issue elections held in Iowa between January, 1996, and August, 1998 (Iowa

Association of School Boards, 1998). Over 55% of these bond issues, or 39 of them, passed. In some instances, a bond issue was presented to the voters more than once before it received the necessary 60% supermajority required in Iowa Code §75.1 for passage. When a bond issue failed in Iowa, the issue could not be submitted again to the voters for at least six months, as stated in Iowa Code §75.1. Of the bond issues that failed during this time, 55% of them would have passed had a simple majority vote been necessary instead of the supermajority.

Need for the Study

With the reasonable success rate of bond issue passage in Iowa between January, 1996, and August, 1998, school boards, superintendents, and community patrons seemed to be assimilating a body of information that could be categorized and developed into resource information that could help other school districts which were considering a bond issue to address facility needs. The fact that almost 45% of bond issues failed during this time span indicated that a compilation of data from school districts which had passed school bond elections could benefit school leaders in Iowa who were contemplating a school bond issue. C. Milton Wilson of the Iowa Department of Education compiled a document, *Steps in a School Bond Election*, that was intended to serve as a guide for Iowa schools to follow in school bond elections. The document provided topics for school boards to consider, along with legal requirements that had to be met in the process of presenting a school bond

proposal to the voters. The guide did not address either district traits or successful strategies that existed in successful school bond elections which could have helped other local school boards to replicate those strategies. Neither did the guide point to potential improvements in those policies and laws that guide elections.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was twofold: to determine if school district factors and campaign strategies existed which were common to successful school bond elections; and to determine the impact that existing policies and laws may have had on school bond issue campaigns and elections. Most information gathered by those contemplating a school bond election had been acquired through one-on-one visits with individuals associated with successful school bond elections. This study focused on factors, strategies, and policy that may influence the outcome of a local school bond election. It was in this sense an applied policy study intended to be of interest to:

1. School boards in Iowa as they adapted procedures that were successful for others to their own needs when considering a school bond election;
2. College or university professors who prepared school administrators for school facilities management and planning;
3. Iowa Department of Education personnel who served as a consultants to Iowa schools during school bond elections; and

4. Those with the power to make changes in laws and regulations that may help school boards in Iowa deal with the problems in a proactive manner, planning for the future, instead of in a reactive manner.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to identify and analyze: (a) selected social, political, and economic factors, (b) successful strategies used in school bond elections, and (c) influential policies related to school bond elections.

Research Questions

1. How were district characteristics, including socioeconomic status of the district population, taxation rates in place, geographic size of the district, student enrollment, and the size of the bond issue, associated with school bond elections?
2. What common strategies, if any, were employed in school districts that had a successful school bond election?
3. What barriers to successful school bond elections stemmed from state or federal policy?
4. What recommendations regarding changes to policy did those who had successful school bond elections propose?

Limitations

Qualitative research was based on determining which sources of data were most appropriate and available. Representative sampling was not the

important issue; rich, valid data was more important (Lofland and Lofland, 1998). In this study, individuals from four Iowa school districts which experienced successful school bond elections between January, 1996, and August, 1998, were selected to interview, along with representatives of two organizations which advised local school boards on a wide range of issues, including issues dealing with school finance. Using the criteria described in Chapter 3 to select the districts for the study, all four districts were medium size school districts for Iowa, and for this reason the outcomes may not have been generalizable across the State of Iowa. The study did not place a value on the merits of any of the school bond elections. The study did not evaluate the competence or personal qualities of anyone or any group associated with the school bond elections or with the two organizations from which representatives were selected. The focus of the study was to describe the work accomplished in the successful school bond elections and to analyze the processes employed which led to the successful school bond election. Information from this study will serve as a resource to others who may be associated in a school bond election and the processes which lead to the election.

Definition of Terms

The assessed valuation of property was determined by each county assessor. The assessed valuation of agriculture land was based on the productivity of the land. The assessed valuation of other property was based on market value.

A bond issue was a proposal placed before the voters in a school district to provide for the new construction and/or remodeling of school facilities.

The bonding capacity of a school district was based on the actual valuation of the property within the school district. Districts could become indebted to a figure equal to 5% of their assessed valuation, less the present indebtedness (Iowa Code §296.1).

A factor was an element of an overall plan which may have affected the outcome of a school bond election.

Policy was a guideline or a set of guidelines established by an authoritative body which provided common procedures and rules that were adhered to in a school bond election.

A school bond election was an election in which the voters in a school district determine whether or not to approve a proposal for facilities construction work for new and/or remodeled school facilities.

A supermajority was a 60% majority of those voting in a school bond election; this majority had to be achieved for passage of the bond issue.

Strategies were methods used by committees to promote the passage of a bond issue.

The taxable valuation of property was based on the assessed value of the property with a rollback adjustment determined by Iowa law, a coupling adjustment for agriculture and residential values, and a taxation of 59.3% of assessed value for residential property.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

School administrators often were accused of establishing the budget for a school district based on the three "Bs," otherwise known as buildings, buses, and basketballs. Bagin and Lefever (1971) contended that the same phenomenon occurred during school bond elections, "Too often, school officials get caught up in the bricks, blocks, and bathrooms of the proposed buildings. Too often they forget about the reasons for the whole process they are involved in--educating people" (p. 30).

Nationwide polls provided hope for public support for financial investment in meeting infrastructure needs. Rebuild America sponsored a poll which was designed to measure the level of desire among the general public for more infrastructure investment in many areas, including public schools. The results which were released on January 27, 1999, indicated that 93% of those polled felt the quality of infrastructure was important to their local communities. With respect to education, 82% favored supplemental federal spending to states for school construction. In announcing the poll results, Frank Luntz (1999) of the Luntz Research Companies which conducted the poll surmised:

Americans of all stripes regard federal spending for the infrastructure as necessary and important, and they clearly link the quality of the infrastructure with their own quality of life. In this age of cynicism toward

Washington, America's infrastructure is one of the few areas where the public believes a dollar spent by government is a dollar well invested (pp. 1-2).

At the local level, the top priority of school officials and board members was to provide the best educational program possible for the benefit of the students. The leaders of the Iowa Association of School Boards (1997) urged local school board members to be alert to major changes in their communities with an eye toward preparedness in times of rapid changes, "The successful school board has the ability to think in the long-term and is continually assessing the changes, trends and issues that have an impact on the long-term vision" (p. 3). Providing quality facilities in which to meet the educational needs of students required the ability of school board members to have a long-term vision which extended for decades in meeting the needs of students for generations to come.

Facilities Trends in the United States and in Iowa

A skilled workforce was necessary to increase productivity so that a society was able to maintain and enhance its standard of living. Public schools were expected to prepare students to meet the technological skill needs which appeared to be necessary in the workforce of the future. Quality educational facilities were needed to help meet the ever-changing and increasing workforce demands.

In 1994, the United States Congress requested that the General

Accounting Office conduct a study to determine whether schools in the United States: (1) provide the key facilities requirements and environmental conditions for education reform and improvement; (2) have appropriate technologies and the facility infrastructure to support new technologies; and (3) have the physical capacity to support learning into the 21st century. In the resulting 1995 report, *School Facilities: America's Schools Not Designed or Equipped for 21st Century*, the GAO (1995b) found that:

1. Most schools are unprepared for the 21st century.
2. At least three-quarters of schools have sufficient computers and televisions, although they do not have the infrastructure to fully use these technologies.
3. One-third of schools with sufficient computers are not networked, limiting their access to available electronic information.
4. About 40 percent of schools cannot adequately meet the functional requirements for laboratory science or large-group instruction.
5. About 54 percent of schools have unsatisfactory instructional space to implement effective teaching strategies.
6. Schools in the same district often differ because the construction of new facilities takes precedent over maintaining and renovating existing facilities.
7. Air-conditioning affects learning because it is necessary for

schools to operate effectively in hot weather or use computers.

8. The majority of schools with air-conditioning are satisfied with its quality, although only about 50 percent of schools have air conditioning in classrooms.
9. Schools in central cities or schools with a minority population of over 50 percent are more likely than others to have insufficient technology elements and unsatisfactory environments conditions (pp. 1-3).

Much of the problem with school facilities stemmed from the age of buildings. Buildings across the United States for decades were built on the factory model of education, where all students were provided the same style of instruction, and students moved from one grade to the next grade into classrooms which were mostly of uniform size. Iowa was a model of the age problem, according to information cited by Bartusek (1994) as furnished by the Iowa Department of Education and presented in Table 2.

Iowa mirrored the 1995 GAO study. C. Milton Wilson, a Department of Education consultant (cited in Bartusek, 1994), explained the circumstances in Iowa as follows: "Equity, technology, accessibility and safety top the list of K-12 school facilities issues" (p. 12). In terms of equity, Wilson challenged, "Compare a school built in the early 1900s to a new building. Are children in these buildings getting the same advantages?" In the early 1900s, schools did not have separate spaces for art and music, movable walls to accommodate groups

Table 2			
Age of Iowa School Buildings Decade of Construction of Buildings and Additions			
Decade	# Buildings	Decade	# Buildings
1860s	2	1930s	204
1870s	0	1940s	141
1880s	13	1950s	935
1890s	34	1960s	1,009
1900s	83	1970s	706
1910s	348	1980s	277
1920s	373		
Source: Bartusek, 1994, p. 12			

of various sizes, media centers and computer labs. Although many school districts had been able to remodel or adjust their spaces, "Sometimes it is not economically feasible to bring an old building up to today's standards," Wilson said (p. 12).

The impact of technology had been felt for several years, and the amount of information available to students in the 21st century seemed to be almost mind-boggling. New demands were created as a result of technology, placing some schools at a disadvantage. Wilson stated, "Classrooms today often have three or four pieces of equipment requiring electricity, yet many facilities built before 1970 have only one electrical outlet per classroom" (p. 12).

The third factor referred to by Wilson, accessibility, addressed more than

doors. Since 1974, barrier-free buildings accessible to people with disabilities were mandated in the Iowa Code. Schools built since that date were to be accessible, but many earlier buildings had not been upgraded for many reasons, including a lack of funds. According to Wilson, true accessibility, "... means features such as elevators, visual fire alarms for the hearing impaired, accessible features such as drinking fountains and restrooms, phones for the hearing impaired, signs for the visually impaired, and other changes" (p. 12).

Safety was a topic of utmost concern to everyone associated with education. In 1994, a fire marshall's report indicated nearly one-half of Iowa schools were in violation of state fire code and safety regulations. While many of the violations were simple to correct, such as unlocking exit doors, others were more serious. Old piping, electrical and ventilation systems presented environmental or electrical hazards. While creaking stairs, wobbly railings, and peeling paint were not cause for abandoning the building, they were signs of decay that had to be addressed. "Unfortunately, public buildings do not take care of themselves," said Wilson. "They require upkeep and maintenance, which costs money" (p. 12).

Cost of Construction

As recently as 1995, architect Randy Cram described the construction market for school districts as a "buyer's market." By that, Cram meant that contractors were looking for work, due to very little construction occurring at that time. Cram also meant that the cost of construction would be reduced, as

contractors cut their margins of profit to make sure they could maintain work crews that would be in place when the demand for construction increased.

With the passage of an increased number of school bond issues, the lull in the construction market seemed to end. As would be expected, the cost of construction appeared to be increasing, but perhaps not as much as one would have anticipated. According to Abrahamson (1998b), "The cost of construction is not going up significantly (in terms of cost per square foot) but it appears that the trend to provide more space for activities, technology and programs is increasing the size of schools at all levels and that, in turn, is increasing the cost per pupil and the overall cost" (p. 6). This trend was further supported by Jay Agron in longitudinal studies reported in the May, 1996, *American School and University Magazine*. In 1970, an elementary school provided 62 square feet per student; in 1995, an elementary school provided 111 square feet per student, which was a 79% increase (p. 22).

Abrahamson (1998a) cited a survey of national and regional new construction projects in *School Planning & Management* which provided information comparing the size and cost of new school construction projects. As would have been expected, the average number of students at each school level was less for the regional states of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. The cost per square foot for construction was less on a regional basis than on the national basis. However, schools in the regional states provided more square feet of space per student, which resulted in higher total costs per student

in the regional states. The information was summarized in Table 3:

Table 3						
Profile of New School Construction						
National Medians						
	\$/Sq. Ft.	\$/Student	Sq. Ft./# Student	Students	Bldg. Sq. Ft.	Bldg. Cost
Elementary	\$97.69	\$11,429	119.0	550	67,000	\$6,500,000
Middle	\$93.49	\$14,286	145.9	709	105,000	\$9,500,000
High	\$92.86	\$16,872	184.8	762	140,000	\$13,500,000
Regional Medians						
Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska						
Elementary	\$90.28	\$13,750	180.0	290	58,000	\$5,500,000
Middle	\$83.33	\$16,667	200.0	383	94,000	\$7,750,000
High	\$77.34	\$16,750	224.1	344	88,500	\$6,547,500
Source: Abrahamson, March, 1998b						

As administrators and school board members grappled with the need to replace outdated buildings, there was an air of optimism, as evidenced by a survey of educational administrators conducted by *American School and University* magazine. According to the results of the survey, administrators projected \$63.47 billion in building projects during the 1998-2000 period. This represented a 26% increase over three-year projections from the previous survey. This projection was supported by the fact that new K-12 construction increased from \$4.92 billion in 1996 to \$6.11 billion in 1997, or an increase of 24% in one year (p. 24).

Understanding the Community

One of the key responsibilities of school board members was to

understand the school district community and the patrons in the school district. Such information was invaluable when considering a school bond issue. The business climate, the economic base, and the demographic characteristics of the voting populace were among the important factors that school board members had to identify and address during the school bond issue campaign.

Community Economic Factors

Communities were in a constant state of change. Businesses were developed, absorbed, or dissolved. The in and out migration of people affected planning and stability. Changing family structures, economic swings, and other demographic factors combined to mean the community served by schools may be significantly different in the future. Educational leaders needed to recognize how communities changed and the speed with which change was occurring. The tax base, so vital to the economy of the community and to the school district, had to be understood. Industrial development served to spur economic growth, which impacted the number of students in school and the needs caused by an increasing student population. Likewise, the closing of a major industry negatively impacted the community and the school. Another important factor was the educational level of most adults in the community, as in their studies, Piele and Hall (1973) found that adults who valued their own education tended to be strong supporters of quality educational opportunities for students (p. 118).

Impact of Societal Changes

In recent years, a trend had developed in which the school and the

community in general united their efforts to provide quality programs and facilities for use beyond the regular school day. Fickes (1998) stated:

The public has always believed that K-12 school facilities should provide benefits to the community beyond education. In today's era of tax cuts and tight educational budgets, public pressure on schools to accommodate more community needs has grown substantially. Adding to this pressure is the fact that adults with no children in school have come to outnumber parents. Community use offers these adults tangible returns on their tax dollars. In return, community use provides school districts with additional funding mechanisms as well as a more complete integration into the day-to-day lives of the communities they serve" (p. 8).

Steven Bingler (1998), president of Concordia Architects in New Orleans, further supported the concept of meshing school and community needs, stating:

If you are going to build a new school, you go out and find all the people in the community who need certain kinds of space. Take the city library for example. consider including the library, or part of the library, in the new school building. Perhaps the local YMCA could incorporate into the school building and operations. For example, my colleagues and I are working on a project in California where a private fitness operator is proposing to fund and manage what will become the physical education facility....Keep in mind that the key to integrating schools and communities is a participatory design process. Educators need to learn

about their colleagues' disciplines. Business representatives need to contribute to learning designs that meld with their work environments. There must be open lines of communication between educators, architects, urban planners, psychologists, students, parents, and community businesses. We need to design schools as if we all were going to live there (p. 15).

The everyday routine of people changed dramatically, and schools were not immune from the market forces that were driving business and industry. In order for school boards to plan facilities which met the demands of the residents of the district, Bartusek (1997) of the Iowa Association of School Boards summarized changes and consumer market trends which organization leaders felt were necessary for school leaders to understand:

1. Speed. People are seldom willing to wait for a product or service; entire businesses are being built on speed.
2. Convenience. The most successful businesses offer conveniences to busy customers; 24-hour banking, drive-through pharmacy service are just two examples. What could your schools be doing to add "convenience" for parents or citizens?
3. Value adding. The business world has learned that constant improvement and upgrading of products and services has become an expectation. What could schools be doing to "add value" to their efforts?

4. Niche marketing. Mass marketing is giving way to segmented or "niche" marketing, in which products or services are created and marketed based on their strengths for specific audiences. Given the nature of public education serving all students, this trend will not play out in an extreme form. However, public schools can still market themselves based on strengths. What are your school district's special assets? What can you offer to meet specific needs (pp. 1-3)?

Effective school leaders were aware of the changes in society and attempted to anticipate the needs of society in the future as they considered school bond issues. Constant awareness of the district's vision in meeting present and future needs helped leaders focus on what was important to the community and allowed the system to effectively manage change instead of reacting to it.

Demographic Characteristics of the Community

Understanding important demographic factors in the school district influenced the outcome of the school bond election. Income level, age, educational background, and owner/renter status were some components of which school officials had to be cognizant and develop appropriate strategies while garnering support for a school bond issue.

The factors that influenced individual voters during a school bond election campaign were almost as varied as the voters themselves. In their

research on voting behavior, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) studied the behaviors of Erie County, Ohio, voters during the 1944 presidential election campaign and concluded: "...a person thinks, politically, as he is socially. Social characteristics determine political preference" (p. 27). In 1973, Piele and Hall summarized several studies associated with socioeconomic status and participation in school financial elections with the following propositions:

1. The greater a citizen's wealth, the more likely the individual will vote in a school financial election;
2. The greater a group's wealth, the greater the average turnout of that group for school financial elections; and
3. The greater a citizen's educational attainment, the more likely the individual will vote in a school financial election (p. 48).

Several additional traits associated with voter turnout were identified in Table 4.

In any election, there were people who simply choose not to vote. Sometimes they expressed disillusionment with the political nature of the act of voting, but many times they did not feel their vote would make a difference in the outcome of the election. Lane (1959) presented another characterization of those who were nonvoters, especially in nonpartisan elections such as school bond issues:

Nonvoters (and non-participants generally) are likely to be lower education, lower income and lower occupational status than voters.

Table 4

Social/Psychological Characteristics Frequently Correlated with Voter Turnout

Higher Turnout

high income
 high education
 whites
 men
 middle-aged people (35-55)
 older people (over 55)
 old residents in community
 crisis situations
 married people
 members of organizations
 while-collar employees

Lower turnout

low income
 low education
 blacks
 women
 young people (under 35)
 newcomers in community
 normal situations
 single people
 isolated individuals
 blue-collar employees

Source: Lipset, 1973, p. 36

middle-aged	young (under 34); old (over 64)
strong partisan preference	weak partisan preference
high interest in campaign	low interest in campaign
high concern about election outcome	low concern about election outcome
high sense of political efficacy	low sense of political efficacy
high sense of citizen duty	low sense of citizen duty
high "political involvement"	low "political involvement"
high education	low education
former urban residents	former rural residents--migrated to city
urban residents	rural residents

Source: Campbell, 1973, p. 36

These groups are carriers of economic (welfare state) liberalism, but also of intolerable, ignorance of political issues and background information, xenophobia, unwillingness to sacrifice for long-range goals, and authoritarianism (p. 341).

Prior to most elections, voters were categorized into one of three groups: those who favored the issue, those who did not favor the issue, and those who were undecided about the issue. Dye and Zeigler (1970) viewed those who frequently voted in local nonpartisan elections as follows:

Only citizens who are intensely committed to the community are likely to vote in local elections. These are the interested, committed, high status citizens of the "normal" electorate. They feel they have a stake in community decision-making and therefore participate frequently in local affairs. Also, their better education makes it possible for them to comprehend elections that are absent of parties and candidates (p. 167).

Getting people to vote was only part of the dilemma facing those involved in a school bond election. The major task was to convince a sufficient number of those who voted to actually vote "yes" for the bond issue. Having some kind of vested interest in the outcome seemed to be vital in convincing people to support school bond elections. In Table 5, Piele and Hall (1973) synthesized relevant factors and identified characteristics of voters who may favor or oppose school financial issues:

Table 5	
Characteristics of Voters Most Likely to Favor or Oppose School Financial Issues	
<u>Yes Voters</u>	<u>No Voters</u>
parents of school age children	nonparents
higher income	lower income
younger	older
blacks	whites
higher education	lower education
Source: Piele and Hall, 1973, p. 122	

Parental support for school bond issues seemed to be logical, as they retained a vested interest in having the best educational opportunities possible for their children. While not all parents supported school bond issues, Bagin and Lefever (1971) reminded school leaders that:

The research consistently points out that parents of children in public schools are among the best supporters....This is important to remember; it is also vital that the information be put to use. For instance, an all-out effort should be made to get these people registered (p. 33).

The struggle with the demographic influences surrounding the passage of school bond issues extended beyond the educational system. The United States faced an aging population, which provided significant economic implications. As reported by Judy and D'Amico (1997) in Workforce 2020:

The final force in shaping our economy is a demographic one. At issue is the impact of the aging of the nearly 83 million Americans now living who were born in the two decades following the end of World War II. These so-called baby boomers are far more numerous than those born earlier or later. Forty-six percent fewer Americans now alive were born between 1926 and 1945; and 11 percent fewer were born between 1966 and 1985. The aging of this substantial cohort of post-World War II baby boomers will significantly affect America's economy. Just as the baby boomers strained the capacity of the nation's elementary schools after 1950, they will fuel increased demand for elder-care facilities after 2010. Between now and then, their numbers and the growing volume of their purchasing power will create more demand for the goods and services that people choose in their later middle age. For example, they will consume more financial services as they save and invest more to provide for their retirement years (p. 38).

Thus, while this influential portion of the population was more likely to vote in favor of school bond issues when they had children in school, the potential existed for them to be less supportive of future financial elections which could prevent them from investing their financial resources for retirement.

Understanding the tendencies of voters was helpful in a school bond campaign only if those spearheading the campaign developed strategies to meet the needs of the various groups. Providing voters with quality information

on which to base voting decisions was a key factor. The local efforts made in providing information to the patrons in a school district can make the difference in turning nonvoters into voters, and in turning voters into "yes" voters.

Strategies Involved in School Bond Issue Campaigns

A school bond issue should be a solution to problems, and voters needed to feel that the proposed solution would somehow benefit them personally. All of the efforts and strategies that went into promoting a school bond issue ultimately led to one focus point: getting voters to vote "yes" for the bond issue in numbers sufficient to pass the issue. All of the strategies employed during a bond issue campaign should reflect a simple election equations proposed by Cannon and Cannon in 1997: "voter information + voter confidence = voter support" (p. 36).

Planning and Organization

Planning for a school bond issue should begin early. Those doing the planning had to do their homework, preparing adequate information on issues such as district growth trends, current and projected educational program needs, reviews of reports which already existed, costs of remodeling current facilities, costs of maintaining current facilities that could be proposed for replacement, and possible locations which would promote efficient district operations. Those who were planning the school bond issue would have done well to listen to district patrons during the developmental stages of the proposal. Mark Settle (1997) of Iowa State University urged leaders to "openly involve the

community in defining the issue placed on the ballot and let people know the alternatives and impact of each solution" (p. 1). Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) were even more emphatic in their support of wide involvement in planning for a bond issue election: "Assess the opinions of the leadership or those with influence in the community....Examine the following of the school leaders. Respect for and confidence in the board of education and the superintendent were almost always present in successful school bond referenda" (pp. 104-108).

A key component in planning for a bond issue election was determining how much time to devote to the actual campaign. The steering committee should listen to the public to determine what was appropriate for the district. Chris O'Brien (1994) of the Heartland Area Education Agency advocated a campaign of about six months in length. According to O'Brien, "Much longer than that and you will annoy voters; much less than that and you may look rushed and impulsive" (p. 1). Each detail of the campaign, from phone calls to direct mail, should be carefully planned. Organizers should take advantage of public activities such as meetings and parades whenever possible. As Cannon and Cannon (1997) emphasized, two campaigns actually were being conducted at the same time: "The internal campaign involving the school community will actually win the election, but the external campaign will garner community support and trust. Both are crucial" (p. 36).

Campaign Committee

Broad based community involvement in a school bond issue campaign was supported in study after study. Whether the group was known as a campaign committee, a steering committee, a citizens advisory committee, or some other name, the function was primarily the same: to assure district patrons that their viewpoints were being considered. Based on their research, Bagin and Lefever (1971) iterated, "So clear is this in the research that it is difficult to imagine an enlightened school district conducting a campaign without one." They further stated:

Some districts have a checkered history of passing bond issues. It is interesting to observe that when those districts had citizen advisory groups involved in the campaign, the bond issues passed. However, in most cases, in the same districts, the bond issues were defeated when no advisory groups were involved (p. 34).

Selection of campaign committee members was a factor that varied among districts. A committee filled with school board members and school staff members can be suspect in the eyes of the public. Board members and staff members certainly needed to work in the campaign in designated capacities but perhaps not as the major players. As Stathulis (1997) contended, "People expect school board members to support a bond issue. After all, it is their job. Sometimes non-school board members appear more credible" (p. 2). Crombie (1998) explained, "It will take a broad-based coalition of all community

members to get a vote in support of a bond issue in a community. The circle of support must expand beyond local associations and boards" (p. 3). In general, the committee should be gender balanced, representative of different age groups, inclusive of many or all civic and community groups, ethnically proportionate for the district population, and considerate of different points of view.

Organization within the campaign committee was required to keep members focused on accomplishing necessary responsibilities to achieve the ultimate goal of a successful bond issue election. The committee chair or chairs needed to have many positive qualities, such as dedication to the task, competence in his or her own field, high visibility in the district, and evident leadership skills. Allen (1968) further emphasized, "The campaign should be headed by a general chairperson who is not an educator or a member of the board of education" (p. 258).

The committee needed members with a variety of skills. O'Brien (1994) pointed out, "Some people are better at stuffing envelopes and making phone calls, and some are better at making presentations and lending their name; both are important" (p. 1). Committee members needed to be flexible, expect the unexpected, know how to respond to adversity, and embrace others when new situations dictate increased involvement. Committee members had to listen to community patrons and what they actually said. Committee members worked as a team to focus on solutions to problems or issues that developed during the

campaign. This required members to leave individual egos outside of the meetings and to avoid placing blame for problems or setbacks on others.

Within the campaign committee, several subcommittees usually were formed. Settle (1997) and Lode (1999) recommended the following subcommittees to carry forward the bond issue campaign: finance and fundraising; publicity; speakers bureau; canvassing; media relations; and precinct workers. Each subcommittee was headed by a separate chairperson and had a job description complete with time frames for achievement of assigned responsibilities. The subcommittee chairpersons reported to the campaign committee chairperson or chairpersons, who coordinated the work of all subcommittees to make certain that deadlines were met and progress continued toward the passage of the bond issue. Many ideas had been developed regarding what the campaign committee and subcommittees should do to assure a successful bond issue election. Bagin and Lefever (1971) proposed the following items as helpful tips for the committee:

- Before preparing materials for distribution and before preparing statements for campaign use, find out what the community is thinking about the issue.
- If you can choose the date of the election, make sure it does not follow the mailing of new tax bills.
- Since numerous studies show that people who have been in the schools support the schools at the polls more than others do,

make every effort to get more people to visit the schools.

- Coffee (or tea or punch) klatsches are often effective. Although time-consuming, these enable school officials or citizens advisory committee people to communicate with voters on a face-to-face level.
- Identify your publics. Make a list of the different publics and make sure you communicate with all of them.
- Most studies indicate that the taxpayers' main sources of information about schools are students and local newspapers. Thus it is imperative that students know the facts regarding the finance issues.
- Establish a hot line during the closing days of the campaign. This phone number should be widely advertised as the place to get answers to questions regarding the finance issue. Even if no one calls on the hot line, it serves the purpose of communicating an open attitude on the part of school officials.
- Include some critics on your citizens advisory council.
- Be honest at all times.
- If you enjoy the luxury of a budget or bond issue that is causing no tax increase, shout that fact.
- When writing or speaking, use language that the man-on-the-street can understand.

- When distributing brochures or newsletters, do not depend on students to get them home, especially after fifth grade. Every home should get a copy. The publications should also be left in places where people have time to read. Barber shops, doctors' offices, and beauty shops are some examples.
- Set up a speakers' bureau offering a slide-tape presentation to community groups.
- After speaking to a service club, ask for an endorsement of the issue if you think the group agrees with the schools' needs.
- The day before the vote, have one of the service groups or the citizens group run an ad in the local paper listing the community groups endorsing the bond issue.
- Be fair to all newspapers, radio stations and television stations in making news available.
- When preparing publications, lay them out for three different kinds of readers--the 30-second reader, the three-minute reader and the 30-minute reader.
- Do not try to explain every detail in the four-page newsletter. For those who want more information, make it clear that they can get it.
- Do not use an architect's rendering of the proposed building in some communities. Some renderings add a lake, large trees and all sorts of embellishments that make the architect happy. These

turn off the voter, however, who feels that a palace is being built.

- Explain what the bond issue will do to improve education.
- Avoid a series of public meetings. These usually provide a forum for opponents to get their ideas to the public via the press.
- Personalize the facts about the budget or bond issue. Show what the money will do for specific groups in preparing communications for those groups.
- Avoid executive sessions at board meetings as much as possible.
- Explain the cost of delay in approving the programs, citing specific inflationary costs.
- Prepare a list of key communicators in the community. Include people not in the formal power structure (pp. 36-43).

A bond issue campaign required much hard work by everyone involved.

Good advance planning, communication, and learning from the experience of others went a long way toward a successful end result.

Leadership

Leadership in a bond issue campaign was crucial in determining the outcome. Legally, the school board assumed a leadership role by appointing a committee to investigate whether or not facilities needs existed. The school board also legally accepted signed petitions calling for a bond issue election and set the specific details of the election. Though school board members had to be mindful of campaign ethics laws, Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971)

supported strong leadership from board members: "Education officials need to furnish leadership in school elections. They must organize politically to support school bond elections, school millage elections, consolidation proposals, and other referenda affecting educational policies in the district" (p. 4).

Individual leadership was needed for the day-to-day needs associated with a school bond election. The person who assumed that role varied with each district, depending on the internal politics and structure within the system. Henry (1994) asserted that school principals played important roles in a campaign development: "Since a principal serves as a key leader in most communities, his or her support and enthusiasm toward the vote affects how parents, students, faculties, and the residents in their communities feel toward the building program" (p. 11). However, due to their regular building level responsibilities, principals were not the ones to whom people looked to keep the bond issue campaign moving according to plans.

Crombie (1998) maintained that "getting a bond issue passed by a community takes a tremendous amount of coordination. It is something that should not be handed off to staff" (p. 3). Updating people weekly, or even daily if necessary, was the responsibility of the leader. Whoever assumed the leadership role needed to remember that communication was a key to a successful bond issue election. As Crombie (1998) concluded, "There needs to be an articulated plan prepared to reach out to the community through public hearings, neighborhood meetings, community organizational presentations,

one-on-one chats with residents, information on the internet and flyers" (p. 3).

Role of the School Board

The initial group with significant influence on the matter of a school bond issue was the school board. The school board, as the governing body of the school district, had the ultimate authority for planning and control of the school district. Individuals or groups of individuals, including the board itself, brought potential needs to the school board for their consideration. The school board assumed its legal responsibility by a motion in its minutes to investigate the reported needs. The board appointed a chairperson or chairpersons to head a citizens' committee to ultimately report back to the board regarding potential needs. This citizens' committee was composed of a cross-section of the community, and subcommittees were identified to investigate areas that were considered to be important. C. Milton Wilson (1997) of the Iowa Department of Education identified several areas the committee may wish to investigate:

- Present and future enrollments.
- How well the facilities serve the needs of the present educational program.
- Planned changes in the educational program and related changes in facility requirements.
- The physical condition of the buildings.
- The financial status and the bonding capacity of the district.
- New approaches to educational methodology, technology, and the

kinds of space required for each.

- Other special areas, such as a new site, additional course offerings, expanded extracurricular activities, and the possibilities of remodeling (p. 2).

When the investigation by the citizens' committee was complete, a final report, including recommendations, was presented to the board. If the committee concluded that new or different spaces were needed, the board accepted the recommendations in its minutes. This decision was crucial to the future of a possible bond issue election. Assuming that proper groundwork had been established with the board and that the investigative report provided a logical conclusion for the board to reach, the work of the board was just beginning. The manner in which the board conducted its work also was significant. Jeannie Henry (1994), deputy executive director of the South Carolina School Boards Association, cited board unity as a key factor: "A unified school board on the bond issue is not just important; it is an absolute must! Board unity is one of the most critical factors determining whether a referendum can pass" (p. 10). A study by the South Carolina School Boards Association supported this contention, finding that split boards lost bond issue elections 70% of the time. Henry further warned that a split board resulted in problems garnering public support because, "...the public feels that the board members have been privy to the best information that is out there. If you cannot bring the board together, then it is very hard to sell it to the public" (p. 20).

One of the earliest responsibilities of the board was to select an architect and other professionals to help district leaders throughout the bond issue campaign, the election, and the responsibilities following the election. Stathulis (1997) urged district leaders to, "Get to know your architects, engineers and contractors before hiring them, and make sure you can all get along. This relationship is vital to the success of the project" (p. 1). Before choosing an architect and other professionals, local leaders needed to determine the scope of the project. The better this was developed locally, the less time the architect had to spend researching issues, which helped contain costs for architects' fees. Armstrong (1994) provided several areas to consider in the project scope:

- Number of rooms and their function.
- Size of rooms and furnishings (closet space, cabinets, sink, drinking fountain).
- Occupancy--how many students will use the room at one time?
- Where do you want the new facilities?
- Do you need city or county approval or special permits before proceeding?
- Location of utilities (gas, water, electricity) and local contacts (name, address and telephone number for each).
- Check with your city or county engineer for any possible restrictions they might be aware of.
- Do you want energy-saving lights and fixtures? Is air conditioning

an option?

- Do you have any soil boring information from previous construction projects?
- Does the school district have any time constraints on the project which require completion by a certain date?
- Have your high school art or drafting class prepare drawings of your proposed project to include in the project scope (pp. 8-9).

Board members had significant responsibility in understanding campaign finance and campaign ethics laws. Failure to comply with these laws had the potential to overturn a successful school bond issue election. Usually, board members were not involved in financing the bond issue campaign, as that was a responsibility of the citizens' campaign committee. Board members may have served on the campaign committee and attend meetings of the committee, but a quorum of board members was not advised to be in attendance at campaign committee meetings or at meetings conducted by the campaign committee, unless proper notices had been made according to the open meetings laws.

Iowa law was very explicit on the use of public funds in support of a specific position on a ballot issue, such as a bond issue election. The code as adopted in 1991 and amended in 1993 also addressed how a board could express a position on such issues:

The state and the governing body of a county, city or other political subdivision of the state shall not expend or permit the expenditure of

public moneys for political purposes, including supporting or opposing a ballot issue.

This section shall not be construed to limit the freedom of speech of officials or employees of the state or of officials or employees of a governing body of a county, city, or other political subdivision of the state. This section also shall not be construed to prohibit the state or a governing body of a political subdivision of the state from expressing an opinion on a ballot issue through the passage of a resolution or proclamation (Iowa Code §56.12A Supp. 1993).

As stated in the law, the school board could adopt a position on a ballot issue, a vote on the position could be taken during a regular board meeting, and the board action was recorded in the official board minutes which were published and were public records in accordance with the Iowa public records law. Paying for the publication of board minutes with such board action in the minutes was not a violation of campaign finance laws, since the board minutes were published following each board meeting, as required in the open meetings laws. The same premise applied to school newsletters, if board minutes were routinely published in the newsletter. The newsletter cannot be used to advocate a position supported by the school board, but the newsletter can be used as a source of objective information related to the ballot issue which did not advocate a position and as a source of information detailing the date of the election and the voter registration deadline.

Board members retained their individual rights in advocating a position on a ballot issue, as long as it was done on the board member's own time and at the board member's personal expense. Board members could campaign as individuals for their specific position on a ballot issue, and they could distribute literature supporting that position, just as any other citizen can do. Likewise, board members could individually solicit votes encouraging the passage or defeat of a ballot issue.

In reality, the work of the school board related to a bond issue began long before it was brought to the public for a vote. Involvement of district patrons in other issues long before a bond issue established the premise that the board welcomed community involvement and ideas. A pattern of positive community involvement affirmed that the board had made efforts in the past to be open and honest with the citizenry, and that the same held true with a school bond issue. Efforts should be made to continually educate the community about programs, enrollment trends, maintenance issues, and other factors which were associated with the educational vision for the district, including school bond issues.

Role of School Staff

School staff members in general played a significant role in school bond issues. They also were in a precarious position, since some people perceived them as supporting a bond issue because they had a vested interest in wanting good school facilities in which to work. If staff members did not support the

bond issue, community patrons who opposed the bond issue tended to use this information in their efforts to defeat it. In emphasizing this point, Stathulis (1997) declared, "When a teacher complains about a poorly managed building project, it can have a devastating effect on the acceptance of future projects" (p. 1). Henry (1994) urged involvement of staff members to affect undecided voters: "All school employees need to understand the rationale for the vote.... Often voters go to district employees--teachers and support staff--to ask their opinions if they are undecided on how to vote" (p. 11). Most studies dealing with the influence of staff members on the outcome of a school bond issue election echoed the sentiments of Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971), who proposed, "Educators must assume a strong and active supporting role. The testimonials and survey data show that school leaders should...serve as resource persons...and aid communication among the several groups involved in the campaign" (p. 113).

Engagement of staff members from the beginning seemed to be logical, since they were the ones who worked in the current facilities and were in the best position to identify the needs of students as they progressed through the educational program. Principals served a leadership role at the building level, as they knew community supporters for their programs who could induce other patrons to support the bond issue. Principals provided input to the staff regarding the progress of plans and the bond issue campaign. Coordination of input from staff teams was another function assumed by principals at times.

Staff members, including all teachers and members of the support staff, needed to be informed every step of the way during the bond issue campaign. Hearing their voices was imperative because they were the ones who worked directly with the students, and as Armstrong (1994) contended, "They need to have direct input into how to make the facilities 'user friendly' " (p. 8).

Legally, staff members had to be cognizant of campaign ethics laws, just as board members, campaign committee members, and school administrators were. An employees' union could adopt and advocate a position on a ballot issue. However, the union was required to conform to campaign finance laws regarding the promotion of the issue. Representatives from the Iowa Association of School Boards (1993) advised, "Caution should also be taken that school officials not encourage or permit the employees' union special access to school resources for the purposes of advocating the ballot issue" (p. 2). The same was true for distribution of literature on school grounds, as employees' unions were obligated to comply with board policy, which usually restricted distribution to outside the school building and outside of school time.

Staff members did not lose their individual free speech rights because they were employees of the school district. However, due to restrictions on the use of public funds for the support of a ballot issue, staff members were restricted to advocating a position outside of their normal working hours. Staff members also could not advocate a position when they were representing the school district in an official capacity. When representing the district, the

employee could only provide information and could not support a position.

When the employee was in a setting in which he/she was not officially representing the school district, the employee could explain his/her personal position on the issue.

School employees were necessary advocates in the school bond issue process. Their positive attitudes toward the issue influenced colleagues and community patrons who held the employees in high esteem. School employees needed to be informed regarding what was occurring, and they also had to be aware of the campaign ethics and finance laws which impacted on them because of their position.

Citizens

At a time when everyone associated with a school district was held to a high degree of accountability, an ongoing communication plan was needed to develop an informed citizenry which could be called upon to support educational initiatives in many forms, including a school bond issue election. According to O'Brien (1994), such a philosophy was more complex and time consuming than a brief bond issue campaign, "but it gives you the competitive edge to put you over that magical 60 percent mark" (p. 1). An ongoing communication plan included employing such tools as newsletters, presentations to a variety of groups throughout the district, open houses, study groups with cross-section representation, staff development, educational opportunities for parents, and annual reports, such as the 280.12/.18 report

required each year of Iowa schools. Informed citizens tended to become involved citizens, which Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) found to be critical to school elections: "The extent to which citizens take part in school affairs influences the outcome of school elections. For example, ineffective citizen participation in school affairs results in lack of reliable information concerning the educational needs of the community" (p. 10).

With specific consideration to school bond issues, district patrons should not have been surprised when a proposal was developed for new or remodeled facilities. Those developing the plan needed to follow the guideline of Stathulis (1997) who admonished planners to, "Listen to others. Listen to what others are actually saying. Do not listen for what you want to hear" (p. 2). The plan presented to the public should have represented the culmination of ideas and input from all parties involved. Broad representation in planning and developing the proposal, essentially a grassroots approach, was highly effective in leading to a successful bond issue election, for as O'Brien said, "...voters listen intently to neighbors' and friends' opinions" (p. 1). When participation in the overall process had been extensive, the sphere of influence of these participants extended beyond that which most district leaders ever realized.

A strong, ongoing communication or public relations plan was vital to the educational health of a school district. When such a plan was in place, complete with a high degree of involvement by district patrons, and the need

surfaced for a school bond issue election, the school leaders were already ahead of the game, as they had a support group in place which could be enlisted to spearhead the bond issue campaign. School officials who led successful bond issue elections were serious about their tasks, were highly organized, and understood the importance of community involvement, for as Henry (1994) stated, "They realize communities must have ownership in the plan and they mobilize local residents as key communicators in their public information thrust" (p. 10).

Power Structures within the District

Within every school district community, there was a structure or process in place by which decisions were made with consideration of the well-being of the general public. Usually this was referred to as a power structure within the school district. Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) defined the power structure as follows:

The power structure of the community is the systematic, relative distribution of social power among the citizens in determining the kind of community they want and the kind of institutional arrangements that will best serve them. The exercise of power by citizens is not equal; there is an unequal distribution of influence in the system. Each school district encompasses an area in which an "establishment" or "establishments" decide whether a factory can be built in a certain location, whether school bonds should be floated for new construction, and other civic

questions. Decisions in the schools are inextricably tied to massive economic and social decisions not under the direct control of the board of education (p. 8).

The formal power structure of a community was sometimes easily recognizable, as it was comprised of local business leaders, chamber of commerce officials, local industry leaders, chief executive officers, and other highly visible people. Sometimes these people held elected offices, but often they were the influentials behind the elected officials, helping formulate policies and strategies which they in turn took to their colleagues in support of the programs proposed by the elected officials. The influentials, through personal prestige with their followers in the school district, molded the opinions of voters concerning the acceptability of educational proposals such as school bond issues. Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) recognized the potential of these individuals because:

The influentials also maintain significant channels of communication, influence, state and national leaders, and have resources (e.g., wealth, mass media access, public position) that can be used to marshal support for opposition to school proposals submitted to the electorate (p. 9).

Usually within each school district an informal power structure also existed. This structure was more difficult to identify since they did not have the constitutions, elected or appointed officers, membership lists, and official meetings that characterized organizations. Nevertheless, they had a definite

social structure, norms, communication system, and leadership hierarchy, and they used their power collectively for certain common goals. As Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) purported, "Informal groups of the power structure are excellent sources for the exercise of personal influence in school elections. The use of 'whisper campaigns' among members of these groups to influence school proposals is one example" (p. 12).

The interesting facet of power structures was that they differed in each school district or community. This made the task for school leaders a challenging one, as they could not assume what the structure was, based on the experiences in other school districts. The only options for local school officials were to become knowledgeable about the political leaders and power structure in their district through direct study and to use this information in a manner which yielded the best results for the district.

Supporters

Various percentages were cited with respect to how many voters supported an issue, how many did not support an issue, and how many were undecided. The most common voter profile seemed to be that 20% of voters voted "no" on an issue, 20% of voters voted "yes" on an issue, and 60% of the voters were undecided and able to be influenced based on the information they received (Lode, 1999). The message for proponents of a bond issue seemed to be somewhat clear: identify and concentrate on the "yes" voters and convince the undecided voters to support the bond issue. According to Edmund (1998)

the potential "yes" voters typically included, "...well-educated individuals, business and professional people, individuals with higher incomes, parents of preschool and school-age children, recent high school graduates, women, and nonwhite voters" (p. 23). The campaign committee was responsible for identifying supporters, making sure they were registered to vote, getting college students to vote by absentee ballot, and contacting supporters to make sure they voted in the election.

District patrons who fell into the "undecided" category sometimes did not fit some of the common myths about school bond issue elections. Lutz and Fields (1996) encouraged school leaders to realize that older voters and those without children in school generally were not opposed to educational issues. In fact, Lutz and Fields found in their studies that older citizens "...like other American citizens, tend to believe that public education is an *important element* in the American democracy, and the 'their' public schools are reasonably good" (p. 16). The campaign committee had to provide these voters with quality information to give them a reason to support the specific bond issue, removing them from the ranks of undecided.

Another consideration in increasing the number of supporters for a bond issue was economic growth within the community. Community and civic leaders had long understood that excellent schools attracted responsible, long-term residents to the community. Business leaders knew that economic growth was more likely in communities perceived to have excellent schools. Property

values tended to improve in communities with quality schools, which benefited everyone in the district, regardless of whether or not they had children in school.

The task of the campaign committee was to enlist these supporters in getting the message out regarding the bond issue. Cannon and Cannon (1997) contended that any referendum had immediate winners who profited from its passage and who should have formed the nucleus of the support group making contacts with other community groups: "These are your strongest supporters. Your school family--that is, faculty and staff, parents, grandparents, and students--should make up the bulk of this group. So get the doughnuts and coffee, go directly to the schools, and ask for their help" (p. 36). The campaign committee needed to build on this database of supporters, keep them informed and excited about the bond issue, encourage them to contact other patrons about the bond issue, and make sure they voted on election day.

Opponents

Opposition to a school bond issue did not come as a surprise to school leaders and the chairperson of the campaign committee. The reasons for opposing a bond issue varied from district to district, and even from voter to voter. In studying the reasons for voters' resistance to bond issues, Bagin and Lefever (1971) found, "Ability to pay taxes, local political structure, number of children in schools, religion, and many other factors have been identified as having influence on school finance election results" (p. 9). Lutz and Fields (1996) also included the concept of alienation in the reasons that patrons voted

against bond issues, as "Alienated voters are strongly disposed *to vote against* the person, party, or issue which has alienated them" (p. 16). A negative school experience, a perceived lack of trust, or any of several other reasons could result in alienated voters.

Identification of bond issue opponents by the campaign committee was an important factor in the election outcome. Crombie (1998) cautioned school leaders, "Never underestimate the power of minority opinions that are against the project. This is an easy trap to fall into....That one minority opinion which disagrees with your proposal may well be representing a silent majority" (p. 5). If possible, campaign committee leaders needed to work to find out the concerns of those who were opposed to the bond issue. Edmund (1998) suggested that a review of historical events in the district could provide some clues about opposition to the bond issue. These events could include, "...a recent strike, scandal or controversial firing; school closings or consolidation; reassessment of property; polarization of communities; private schools versus public schools; a perceived poor economy; a credibility problem with the school administration or board; and a hostile press" (pp. 23-24).

In addition to expecting opposition to a bond issue, school leaders also could count on opposition leaders to use campaign tactics that were less than desirable. Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) warned school leaders to expect that, "The opposition might publicize half-truths, make charges that cannot be supported by the data, distort the meaning of the data, engage in personal

attacks, appeal to group prejudice, and insert irrelevant issues into the campaign as a smokescreen" (p. 120). If the opposition was organized, these typical opponents could include a local taxpayer association, private school supporters, large landowners, or large property owners. Another source of opposition came from voters who had what Henry (1994) called "side Issues." Henry asserted, "Side issues can kill you! Often, voters do not really object to the tax increase, but are upset or frustrated at a side issue....A side issue may be an event just unfolding or an historic community split" (p. 10). If groups existed which were frustrated with other issues, such as the curriculum, they could have been waiting for an opportunity such as a bond issue to express their dissatisfaction with an aspect of the school system by openly opposing the bond issue.

Once the opponents to a bond issue had been identified, strategies had to be in place to appropriately deal with the opposition. Cannon and Cannon (1997) maintained, "The referendum must be tight and 100 percent defensible. Do not get talked into any window dressing or questionable spending. Tax opponents are hiding behind every tree, watching and waiting" (p. 35). While factual information was not as exciting as impassioned pleas for better facilities, the facts provided the basis for defending a proposal in the face of opposition. Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) developed several strategies to employ in the face of opposition:

1. When dealing with a person who does not agree with the logic

being advanced, the school supporters should not argue. State the position positively and calmly, and support it by focusing on the objectives to be achieved for children.

2. It is best not to engage in extemporaneous public debate. The wise procedure is to repeat the positions necessary to support the proposal.
3. Do not persist with those who have made up their mind.
4. A favorable press is not assured.
5. Never personally attack or ridicule the opponents or their reasoning. Do not make the opposition "martyrs with cause" (p. 120).

Those opposed to a bond issue had less of a burden than campaign supporters had. Facts did not have to be as exact, if used at all. Misinformation could be presented in any manner, without documentation. Dealing with the opposition became a major responsibility for the campaign committee and school leaders. A plan needed to be in place from the beginning, perhaps including the appointment of a separate subcommittee specifically to deal with opposition matters or crisis situations. There also needed to be a realization that in most cases, a major oppositional thrust occurred during the final days of the bond issue campaign, when little if anything could have been disseminated to counter the opposition. The best plan seemed to be that the campaign was focused on the needs of students, that factual information was accurate and as

easily understood as possible, and that the campaign was positive in promoting what would benefit the school system and the community at large for years to come.

Informing the Public about the Bond Issue

The campaign committee and school leaders may have been organized in all facets of related to the bond issue campaign, but if information was not presented to the public in a well-designed, logical manner, it was highly likely that the bond issue election would fail. It was incumbent on those leading the bond issue campaign to understand the ways in which district patrons learned about what happened in the district schools and how to use these methods to inform the public about the bond issue.

An early decision of the campaign committee was to define a focus of the information. While this seemed like a simple task, studies revealed that the obvious often was not practiced by school leaders. In their studies, Bagin and Lefever (1971) found, "Many districts distribute publications purporting to show the need for the building. But seldom do the publications focus on kids" (p. 30). They also discovered that newspaper stories seldom featured stories about the curriculum: "Many studies show that curriculum and stories about classroom activities account for only 5% of educational news. Yet numerous studies indicate that curriculum and classroom news are on top of the list of topics that people want to read about" (p. 10). Data such as this should have indicated to campaign committee leaders that bond issue information had to focus on

students and the curriculum benefits to be derived from passage of the bond issue.

School bond issue campaigns varied from district to district, and communication efforts that worked in one district often were not applicable or effective in another district. Knowing what worked in a given district was discovered by listening to patrons, which was a result of one of the most powerful methods of getting information to the public: one-on-one communication. An example of this was cited by Stathulis (1997) concerning a bond issue passed in Massillon, Ohio, where a campaign worker was charged with selling the issue to a large constituency: "It was key to recruit someone from the community and not someone from the school board to run the bond issue. I was able to recruit 250 people to the campaign and sell it as something that was best for our community" (p. 2).

In many locations the main source of news coverage of any kind was the local newspaper. Frequently these newspapers were published on a weekly basis, which was somewhat limiting in providing information to the public. Rural areas often did not have easy access to local radio or television, and even segments within a school district accessed certain types of media, such as cable television, while other parts of the district did not receive such service. In a study of campaign activities in 1994 and in 1996, Settle (1997) and his colleagues at Iowa State University provided the data in Table 6 about activities that were used by those who were successful in the elections:

Table 6	
Campaign Activities of Winners, 1994 & 1996	
Made Presentations	96%
Wrote Letters to Editor	92%
Advertised in Newspaper	90%
Distributed Brochures	89%
Yard Signs and Posters	82%
Canvassed County	76%
Advertised on Radio	74%
Made Public Mailings	71%
Advertised on TV	8%
Source: Settle, 1997, p. 5	

Obviously, more than one communication technique was needed to present the bond issue information to the public. Studies by Boss and Thomas (1968), Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971), Allen (1968), Crosby (1963), Henry (1994), and Crombie (1998) provided several suggestions for communicating the need for the bond issue to the public:

1. Simplicity was important. Allen (1968) suggested that three or four main arguments for the district's proposal should be carefully identified. "Confine the campaign to these three or four main points. Most voters do not want to know as much as the

administrator or school board, and could not remember it all if they wanted to hear it. The simple, honest, direct approach is always the best" (p. 258). Crosby (1963) probably stated the point best when he said, "Too much school bond literature is about as readable and inviting as a weather bureau report. Graphs, charts, tables--these hold little interest for the bridge devotee, the factory worker, the housewife, or many professional people. Keep the language simple and to the point. Pitch it to the man on the street. Never use the word 'needs'; use 'opportunities' instead, and remember that the public has little idea of what the term 'mill' means. It is best not used" (p. 28). Henry (1994) encouraged leaders to leave out educational jargon (p. 11). The voices of experience were clear--concentrate your material on a few key points, avoid minute details, make it attractive and readable, and avoid educational jargon.

2. Emphasize objectives. Show what was in it for each sector of the community, if possible. The "what is in it" was extremely important for childless couples, the unmarried, and senior citizens who derived no direct benefit from schools in terms of children to be educated. The appeal to such persons could have stressed how better educational opportunities made better communities, thus increasing property values and attracting more persons to share

the tax load. Crombie (1998) advocated clear identification of the need for the bond issue: "What may be very obvious to the practicing professional may not be on the radar screen of the public, and the benefits of the project have to be explained in a clear and concise manner" (p. 4).

3. Focus on the children. Materials needed to be child-centered, stressing services to children and not cost to the taxpayers.
4. Dealing with the cost. Crosby (1963) advised that in presenting the cost of a proposal, school leaders identified one spot in a brochure for "Hard, Cold Facts," where the cost was indicated in a factual manner without "covering up" in any way. In citing cost figures, the concept of simplicity was again important. More specifically, in dealing with the cost of the proposal, it needed to be reduced to the cost per individual family (p. 28).
5. Positive approaches. The campaign material should have been positive in content. Objectives, benefits to be derived, and educational services needed to be accented in an honest, straightforward manner. Threats, high pressure, shame, and appeal to prejudice were avoided tactics in campaign literature.
6. Highlight support. The support of individuals or groups in the campaign literature was significant. The importance of publicizing support from the various sectors of the community could not be

overemphasized.

7. Locations of printed information. Campaign committee leaders provided information for people where they gathered. These locations included the hair dressers' salons, offices of doctors, banks, post offices, grocery stores, and other places unique to a given district.
8. Public presentations. Presentations were developed with the audience in mind. The printed brochure was distributed to use as a reference, but time was not spent on reading it. The setting was as comfortable as possible, and questions were encouraged.
9. Media. The media in the community were not overlooked, working closely with all representatives to describe the district's needs and to gain objectivity, if not support, for the campaign.

"Getting the word out" about the bond issue campaign was not a simple task. A variety of methods had to be employed, and efforts should have been made to reach every voter in some manner. The foci of the information were students and the benefits to the educational program that were derived through the bond issue. Honest, factual information went far in establishing and maintaining the credibility of the campaign committee and the school leaders who were at the forefront of promoting the bond issue.

The Election

The timing of an election was as critical to the outcome as any of the

topics presented thus far. The best time to conduct an election varied from district to district, just as many other factors did. Edmund (1998) suggested the following events may affect the timing of an election:

1. Avoid a bond issue election at the same time that another taxing body is running a referendum in the district.
2. A bond issue should not be held after a major industry has closed in the district, and people are scrambling for jobs.
3. Recently failed bond issues in neighboring school districts could impact on the election outcome.
4. The bond issue should be the only one on the ballot (p. 22).

Many legal responsibilities were associated with a bond issue election. Before a petition to election could be called, the board had to project the dollar figure total cost of the project from the estimated square feet needed. This dollar figure was included on the petition to call the election. A legal consultant was employed by the board to develop the petition and to be in charge of all legal proceedings to safeguard procedures concerning the bond issue and the subsequent building program. The petition had to be stated in broad, general terms so the local board was not restricted with respect to specifications for the building or site. C. Milton Wilson (1997) of the Iowa Department of Education had outlined several other legal considerations associated with a bond issue election:

1. Be sure petitioners sign their given names. For example, not Red

Jones, but Raymond J. Jones; and not Mrs. Elmer John, but Arlene Selma John. The address of the petitioner must also be included.

2. At least 25% of the number of legally qualified voters voting in the last election of school officials must sign the petition (Iowa Code §296.2).
3. When enough signatures have been obtained, a legal voter of the district must file the petitions with the president of the board and attest to the validity of the signatures (Iowa Code §296.2).
4. Within ten days after the president receives the petition, the president shall call a meeting of the board to set the time, date and place of the election, which may be a special election or may be held at the regular election (Iowa Code §296.2).
5. The president shall notify the county commissioner of elections of the time of the election (Iowa Code §296.3).
6. The county commissioner shall publish notice at least four days and not more than twenty days before the election in a newspaper published in the district, or if there is none, in a general circulation newspaper published in the county (Iowa Code §49.53).
7. The bond election must be held not less than four nor more than twenty days after the last publication of the notice (Iowa Code §49.53).
8. All special elections authorized or required by law, unless

applicable laws require otherwise, shall be held on Tuesday (Iowa Code §39.2).

Meeting all of the legal requirements for the election did not assure a successful result. In the final days of the campaign, getting people to vote became the highest priority for campaign workers. Bagin and Lefever (1971) advocated campaign workers and other friends of the school making it easy for supporters to vote in the election: "Transportation and babysitting services should be provided. Phone calls should be made to all parents on the day of the election to remind them to vote. Some people just plain forget it is election day" (p. 33). Other strategies could be needed to bring out the bond issue supporters, and as with all other aspects of the bond issue campaign, the committee and school leaders had to use these strategies on election day to help bring about a positive result.

Laws Affecting School Bond Issue Campaigns and Elections

Throughout the school bond issue campaign, everyone involved in promoting the bond issue were required to abide by the laws which impacted on campaigns and elections. Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) urged campaign organizers and school leaders to "Make sure legal requirements are met. School officials should 'lean over backward' in following the law and being fair" (p. 107). Failing to follow applicable laws could result in reprimands, fines, or even the overturning of successful election results.

Perhaps the overriding laws which applied from the beginning of the

bond issue campaign through the election and after the election were those found in Chapter 56 of Iowa Law. This chapter dealt with campaign finance disclosure and the associated campaign ethics issues. School leaders and campaign committee chairpersons would do well to contact the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board early in the process and to contact the Board regarding any questions about whether or not an activity could be conducted in connection with the bond issue campaign.

Several sections of the Code of Iowa pertained to restrictions or limitations regarding the financial aspects of a bond issue:

1. The bonding capacity of a school district was based on the actual valuation of the property in the district. The maximum amount of district indebtedness was 5% of the actual district property valuation, less any existing indebtedness (Iowa Code §296.1).
2. An amount not to exceed \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation could be certified by the school board to pay the principal and interest owed in any one year (Iowa Code §298.18).
3. If the vote in favor of the issuance of such bonds to cover the indebtedness was equal to at least 60% of the total votes cast for and against the proposition at the election, the school board "...shall issue the same and make provision for payment thereof" (Iowa Code §75.1 and §296.6).
4. If the amount required to pay for the principal and interest

exceeded the \$2.70 tax rate, the board had to place a second question on a ballot, requesting voters to approve an increase in the tax levy up to a limit of \$4.05 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation (Iowa Code §298.18).

5. The proposition to exceed the \$2.70 limit and the proposition specifying the needed increase could be voted on at the same time. Sixty percent of those voting had to approve both measures before the additional amount could be levied (Iowa Code §296.6).
6. Interest on invested monies made available by the bond issue could be spent to construct or equip the building made possible by the bond issue or to retire the indebtedness (Iowa Code §12C.14).

In addition to the laws cited above, there were laws which applied to the sale of bonds and other matters that became relevant after the passage of the bond issue. School boards needed to hire legal consultants who were knowledgeable in each aspect, and doing so early in the process potentially prevented problems throughout the campaign, the election, and after the election. Architects and organizations such as the Iowa Association of School Boards were available to help identify competent practitioners who worked with school boards to make certain that all applicable laws were being followed.

Summary

From the initial stages of a considering a bond issue through the bond issue election, considerable planning, organization, mobilization of groups, and

involvement of community patrons were required. It took good planning, sound decision making, and much hard work to win a school bond issue election. It was not done by school leaders alone. Help and support from a broad spectrum of district patrons were needed. This was the only "right" thing to do, for the schools belong to the community, and they were only as good as the taxpayers of the district wanted them to be.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Introduction

Qualitative research methodology was selected for this study to learn about the elements associated with the successful school bond elections in four Iowa school districts and about factors associated with school bond elections which were deemed relevant by two experts who were familiar with school bond elections and who advised school boards throughout the processes leading to a school bond election. As defined by Lofland and Lofland (1998), qualitative research was used to examine social phenomena in their natural settings, with researchers going to the phenomena for investigative purposes. Martin (1998) further stated that qualitative research did not use numbers in its analysis, that data was usually in the form of words that had been recorded to represent observations, and that observations were usually made in the real world. As cited by Schratz (1993),

Educational research based on quantitative measurement, variables, experimentation and operationalization usually transfers the original 'voices' of its research subjects into statistical data, mathematical relations or other abstract parameters. Therefore, very little is left of the social context in which educational practices occur. What is left over represents the 'noise' in the transmission of data and is reduced to its minimal disturbance in the research process. Thus the original voices

from the field become the 'disembodied' voices in the discourse of quantitative research presented through reports, articles and books (p. 1).

A school bond election was a social process which engulfed the essence of a school community in determining how the needs of its young people could be best met in the facilities available, thereby epitomizing the social contextual circumstance and allowing research subjects to "tell their story" about what was done to result in a successful school bond election.

The question then became, "How does qualitative research differ from quantitative research?" Roman and Apple (1990) recognized that in using qualitative research, nonconventional criteria for determining the value of a study had to be devised. They suggested the following criteria:

1. The report must resonate with the subjects' actual lived experiences.
2. The report must enable the subjects to comprehend their experiences of subordination.
3. The report must lessen the "structural divide" between academics and actors.
4. The report must not be pretentious or condescending--interpretations and concepts must be generally accessible.
5. Subjects must find the report demystifying and clarifying.
6. The researcher's prior theoretical understandings must also be

modified.

7. The inquirer must take ethical and political issues seriously--no intellectual tourism is allowed (p. 84).

Several concerns existed with respect to qualitative research methodology, with validity usually surfacing early in the discussion. Wolcott (1990) proposed that there had been an "evolution of validity as a desirable but ambiguously defined criterion for *all* research," moving from test validity to validity of test data to validity of test and measurement data to validity of research data on tests and measurements to validity of research data to finally validity of research (pp. 124-125). For educational research, Goetz and LeCompte (1984) defined validity as follows:

Validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings. Establishing validity requires (1) determining the extent to which conclusions effectively represent empirical reality and (2) assessing whether constructs devised by researchers represent or measure the categories of human experience that occur (p. 210).

Wolcott (1990) developed several points to satisfy the implicit challenge of validity in qualitative research:

1. Talk little, listen a lot. Never confront informants with shock, contradictions, or blatant disbelief. Have things repeated or explained.
2. Record accurately. By recording as soon as possible, to capture

words and events, effort is made to minimize the potential influence of some line of interpretation or analysis that might result in selectively remembering or recording.

3. Begin writing early. Begin preparing a rough draft soon after field work begins.
4. Let readers "see" for themselves. A conscious effort is made to include primary data in the final account, not only to give readers an idea of what the data are like, but to give access to the data themselves.
5. Report fully. Sometimes a comment or observation can be introduced via brackets or footnote to flag an issue that is not as well resolved as the prose implies or not developed more fully because the data is "thin" or certain events did not occur during the time of the fieldwork.
6. Be Candid. Subjectivity is considered as a strength of qualitative approaches, and an attempt is not made to establish a detached objectivity which may not be wanted or needed.
7. Seek feedback. Accuracy of reported information is a critical dimension, and informed readers, especially those close to the setting, can monitor for correctness and completeness.
8. Try to achieve a balance. At some point during the writing/revision process, an assessment must be finally made with respect to how

what is written reflects the setting and the individuals on which the report is based.

9. Write accurately. This is literally a grammatical examination to make sure verbs are appropriate, generalizations have referents in what has been seen or heard, and points of conjecture are marked with appropriate tentativeness (pp. 127-134).

This research was designed to understand the strategies and influences surrounding school bond elections from those who had participated in successful elections and from those who were regarded as experts on the topic. The recommendations of Wolcott regarding the collection, compilation, and analysis of data were valuable in developing the final report. The concepts from Roman and Apple about reporting helped keep the focus on the report itself and on those who read the report to better understand how a successful school bond election campaign could be conducted.

Selection of the Districts

This study was accomplished in four Iowa school districts. In selecting the districts for the studies, several common variables associated with school bond elections were considered:

1. The assessed valuation of the school district was considered to be an indication of the relative wealth of a school district and was significant in determining the bonding capacity of the district. The assessed valuation of the school district was not an indication of
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the commitment of the school district to provide quality educational facilities for the educational program.

2. The amount of the bond issue could have been an indication of the commitment of the school district to provide quality educational facilities, but it became more significant when compared with the wealth of the district, as defined by the assessed valuation. A district which had a large assessed valuation had the ability to request a larger bond issue. However, the bond issue may have represented a small percentage when compared with the assessed valuation of the district. The percentage the bond issue represented when compared with the assessed valuation of the school district was an indication of the commitment of the voters. This percentage cannot exceed five percent by law (Iowa Code §296.1).
3. The cost of the bond issue per student reflected the investment by the school district patrons based on the most important commodity in the district--the students. The cost of the bond issue per student was not a function of district wealth but of commitment of the voters to providing quality educational facilities for students involved in the educational program.

For this study, the four school districts were selected based on the two variables which provided significant indications of the commitment of the voters

to provide quality educational facilities in which to deliver the educational program of the district to students: the cost of the bond issue per student, and the percentage the bond issue represented when compared with the assessed valuation of the school district. In Table 7 school districts which had successful school bond elections between January, 1996, and August, 1998, were identified based on data from the Iowa Association of School Boards (1998). The districts were arranged according to the cost of the bond issue per student, with River Valley having the highest figure. As was obvious, the percentage the bond issue represented when compared with the assessed valuation varied considerably. However, the four districts which had the greatest cost of bond issue per student also had the highest percentage when comparing the size of the bond issue with the taxable valuation, only in a different order. Those four districts, River Valley, Monticello, West Sioux, and Maquoketa Valley were chosen for the study.

Selection of Interviewees

The selection of the people to interview in each district began with the same list in each district: the most knowledgeable person on the school board at the time of the school bond election, the superintendent at the time of the school bond election, and the chairperson of the citizens' committee, or a highly knowledgeable citizen on the committee, which spearheaded the bond issue election. The superintendent of each district was contacted, and the purpose of this study was explained. Each superintendent was told about the request to

Table 7
Successful Bond Issues
January, 1996, to August, 1998

DISTRICT	AMOUNT	ENROLL	AMT/PUPIL	PERCENT	VALUATION
RIVER VALLEY	\$5,885,750	628.2	\$9,369.23	5.0%	\$117,715,193
MONTICELLO	\$8,850,000	1,122.5	\$7,884.19	4.6%	\$191,918,065
WEST SIOUX	\$6,400,000	832.1	\$7,691.38	5.0%	\$128,056,147
MAQUOKETA VALLEY	\$8,100,000	1,057.6	\$7,658.85	4.9%	\$166,841,368
BCLUW	\$5,200,000	688.6	\$7,551.55	3.3%	\$155,664,623
GALVA-HOLSTEIN	\$4,950,000	665.9	\$7,433.55	3.7%	\$135,437,524
WALNUT	\$2,000,000	301.8	\$6,626.91	3.1%	\$64,079,569
SHEFFIELD-CHAPIN	\$2,450,000	373.4	\$6,561.33	3.0%	\$82,465,387
SERGEANT BLUFF-LUTON	\$7,500,000	1,194.1	\$6,280.88	2.2%	\$342,024,602
OGDEN	\$4,700,000	767.0	\$6,127.77	3.4%	\$137,499,130
SIDNEY	\$2,700,000	444.1	\$6,079.71	3.3%	\$82,205,465
ENGLISH VALLEYS	\$2,875,000	476.0	\$6,039.92	3.6%	\$80,102,531
NORTH CENTRAL MANLY	\$3,700,000	614.2	\$6,024.10	3.2%	\$115,797,566
CAMANCHE	\$6,200,000	1,060.0	\$5,849.06	2.6%	\$235,632,526
LINN-MAR	\$25,000,000	4,311.9	\$5,797.91	1.6%	\$1,519,194,008
TREYNOR	\$2,900,000	504.2	\$5,751.69	3.2%	\$90,049,604
WILLIAMSBURG	\$5,300,000	976.8	\$5,425.88	2.4%	\$217,260,333
NEWTON	\$19,000,000	3,589.2	\$5,293.66	3.7%	\$513,671,057
MARION	\$7,970,000	1,720.0	\$4,633.72	3.3%	\$244,314,829
ST. ANSGAR	\$3,330,000	755.0	\$4,410.60	1.9%	\$171,712,666
MID-PRAIRIE	\$5,400,000	1,237.6	\$4,363.28	1.2%	\$445,546,080
ANAMOSA	\$6,100,000	1,414.6	\$4,312.17	3.8%	\$160,574,494
CLEAR LAKE	\$6,900,000	1,618.0	\$4,264.52	2.4%	\$286,430,588
WAUKEE	\$7,200,000	1,695.9	\$4,245.53	1.9%	\$382,228,846
LAURENS-MARATHON	\$1,700,000	536.2	\$3,170.46	1.5%	\$112,144,431
HART-MELV-SANB	\$3,000,000	952.2	\$3,150.60	1.6%	\$192,945,271
NORTH SCOTT	\$8,600,000	3,085.5	\$2,787.23	2.0%	\$437,432,771
IOWA FALLS	\$3,500,000	1,266.1	\$2,764.39	0.9%	\$389,745,620
NORTH WINNESHIEK	\$1,000,000	405.0	\$2,469.14	1.6%	\$64,406,015
NORA SPRINGS	\$1,200,000	512.0	\$2,343.75	1.6%	\$76,628,369
ORIENT-MACKSBURG	\$825,000	378.0	\$2,182.54	1.0%	\$86,005,532
BETTENDORF	\$9,700,000	4,559.0	\$2,127.66	1.4%	\$697,686,744
CENTERVILLE	\$3,800,000	1,818.0	\$2,090.21	2.1%	\$182,913,192
HIGHLAND	\$1,300,000	623.6	\$2,084.67	1.5%	\$89,541,555
MASON CITY	\$9,200,000	4,729.1	\$1,945.40	2.6%	\$351,858,915
NORWALK	\$3,750,000	1,945.9	\$1,927.13	2.3%	\$165,900,634
CLINTON	\$9,000,000	5,002.2	\$1,799.21	1.5%	\$604,197,516
BENNETT	\$495,000	301.0	\$1,644.52	0.7%	\$68,002,263
JOHNSTON	\$3,750,000	3,195.6	\$1,173.49	0.6%	\$617,231,665

Source: Iowa Association of School Boards, 1998

interview participants in the bond issue process, with the caveat that other individuals would be interviewed if they were highly knowledgeable about the bond issue. In each case, the superintendent identified three people: the superintendent, the board president in three districts and a board member who had been involved in previously failed bond issues as well as in the successful one, and the chairperson of the campaign committee. When asked if there were other citizens who were knowledgeable about the entire process, each superintendent indicated that the chairpersons were the ones who had the best overall perspective of every aspect of the bond issue, and that other community patrons were highly involved, but they did not have the total understanding of the bond issue that the chairperson had.

Two organizations which regularly received requests for assistance were the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Association of School Boards, and consultants from these agencies were interviewed as experts with a broad, statewide perspective on bond issues in Iowa. The organizations and their experts who assisted school boards in issues such as school bond elections were chosen based on their roles in working with several school boards, their background in school bond elections, and their influence with a wide variety of school boards. Their input was valuable in helping to analyze the data from the district representatives and to substantiate findings from the data.

Data Collection Techniques

The primary data collection techniques for this study were interviews of

key individuals associated with successful school bond elections and two individuals who were considered to be experts in working with school boards through their capacities as consultants from the Department of Education and the Iowa Association of School Boards. The same basic questions were used with each interviewee, but additional probing or clarifying questions were employed to obtain more precise information. All interviews were recorded on audio tape and transcribed precisely for review and analysis. Notes taken during the interviews supplemented the transcriptions. Demographic information about each district was obtained from the Department of Education, the Department of Management, and the Iowa Association of School Boards.

Data Analysis

This research study was designed to obtain responses from participants which indicated the reasons that school bond issues passed in the participating school districts. The study was not intended to compare school districts, nor was it designed to critique the districts or participants. The study was designed to secure consistent types of information from all participants through the use of general questions, with the flexibility for each individual participant to "tell the success story" and the reasons behind the success in each district.

The data collected through the interviews was described first by each district according to the major research categories: district characteristics; strategies used during the school bond election campaign; policy issues; and recommendations, with subcategories utilized in the analysis to further clarify

data obtained from the interviewees. The same process was used to categorize data collected from the consultants from the Department of Education and the Iowa Association of School Boards. Data then was reviewed across all four districts in each of the above categories and identified subcategories. An interpretation and discussion of the findings from the districts and the consultants based on the literature concluded the chapter on findings.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

In this chapter in-depth information was provided relevant to the research questions identified in Chapter 1, as they related to each selected school district and the expert interviewees. Separate sections were devoted to each selected school district. Following this data, a section was devoted to findings which were similar across all four districts. Sections then were devoted to information received from the consultants from the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Association of School Boards. A final section contained additional findings and analyses which incorporated the information from the expert interviewees and support for findings present in professional literature.

District A

District A covered approximately 217 square miles. The economy was based in agriculture, but since it was within 30 miles of a larger city, many newer district patrons resided in the district but worked in the larger city. What industry existed was mostly associated with agriculture, and there was not one major industry that predominated.

Need for New Facilities

The needs of District A paralleled the needs of many districts in the United States and in Iowa. All school buildings in the district at the time of the bond issue election were old, with the newest one having been built in 1922

and the oldest in 1903. Typical of the buildings constructed in that era, the ceilings were high, ventilation was poor, only one thermostat existed in the high school building which resulted in temperature extremes at either end of the building, and the boilers were difficult to repair "simply because they were dinosaurs," according to the school board president. The superintendent also cited the need for new facilities for educational reasons, "They not only were deteriorating from a physical standpoint, they simply did not meet the needs of today's education at all." District personnel had been working to update the curriculum opportunities as well, but some portions could not be modernized due to inadequate facilities.

Community Economic Factors

Socioeconomic factors often entered into the success or failure of a bond issue. In District A, the general feeling was that these factors did not enter into the total picture of the election, even though the percentage of students receiving free or reduced meal benefits was more than 3% above the state average. The committee chairman felt there were "rich" people in the district, but that some of them were not in support of the bond issue. The superintendent acknowledged that socioeconomic factors always had an influence on a bond issue, but stated, "That is what you must do when you are trying to pass a bond issue. You must address those populations and try to work with them to make them understand or to overcome their concerns."

Demographic Characteristics of the Community

School board members and school leaders knew that because the district was highly agricultural, farm property owners would bear the brunt of the cost of the new facilities. The shape of the district forced officials to consider how to best meet the needs of the people located at the far ends of the district.

The assessed valuation of the district would have been considered as above average by state standards, while the tax rate was in the average range. The superintendent stated that the district cash balance was good and that the district was in a good financial position overall.

Enrollment

Prior to the 1998-99 school year, the district enrollment had been stable. A drop of 20 students caused some concerns, but due to the close proximity of the district to a large city, the feeling was that as more people sought educational opportunities away from large settings, the district enrollment would increase. In fact, a developer had plans in place to build up to 70 new houses in the community, which likely would have a positive impact on district enrollment. School officials also were counting on the new school facilities to influence people to move to the community.

Size of the Bond Issue

The school board requested the maximum amount allowed under the law for the bond issue, which was 5% of the assessed valuation of district property. Several farmers served on the campaign committee, which helped provide

support for the bond issue even though the farmers knew they would face a large portion of the tax burden. School leaders said the public knew the new facilities would cost a lot, but that the need was such that the size of the bond issue was not a major factor in the eventual outcome.

Planning and Organization Associated with the Bond Issue Campaign

Prior to determining that a bond issue campaign would occur, the school board appointed a long-range planning committee to review several district needs. This committee evolved into the bond issue campaign committee when the board decided to proceed in meeting the needs identified through the long-range planning process. This was the third bond issue election presented to the voters in the district, so much of the planning involved in getting the campaign committee organized was already understood from the previous campaigns.

Campaign Committee

The campaign committee was comprised of about 20 patrons and did not use a campaign theme. Serving on the campaign committee provided challenges, as identified by the committee chairperson, "I guess I felt I knew a lot of these people. Some of the worst enemies against this thing are my good friends. I knew everybody. I started on one street corner and went right down the block. Some of it was okay, and some of it was not." However, the superintendent characterized the committee as very dynamic with good leadership coming from it.

Leadership

Leadership in a bond issue campaign can emanate from several sources. The school board placed itself in a role of supporting the bond issue, but doing so in a background capacity. Board members felt a grassroots approach in the bond issue campaign would engender more community support than for board members, school administrators, and staff members to be out front during the campaign.

The superintendent considered himself as a facilitator and an enabler who was responsible for amassing necessary information and for bringing the people together that could provide expert advice, like the bond attorney, the bond financial advisor, the architect, and the project manager. He worked with the school board, bringing them along throughout the campaign, and with the campaign committee.

The campaign committee chairperson had served on the long-range planning committee, and when it evolved into the bond issue campaign committee, he was encouraged by many constituents to head the effort. As a farmer, he knew many of the farmers who would either support or oppose the bond issue. His geographic location in the northern part of the school district also served as a unifying force to garner support from that portion of the district, which had less population than the southern portion of the district.

Key Person

In political processes, one or two individuals tended to emerge as the

ones without whom the election would fail. In District A, the consensus was that the campaign committee chairperson was the key person who made things happen. The campaign chairperson also gave credit in general to the volunteers on the original long-range planning committee, which was comprised with representatives of all communities in the district. The board president was very adamant that the main person in spearheading the bond issue campaign should not be someone in the school, and that this person needed to be someone who was respected in the community, did not have an obvious "axe to grind," and did not have other political aspirations in mind. The board president also felt this person had to be "willing to become involved and put in a lot of time and that they do not have any obvious reasons for doing it, except that they support the school and the kids. So you have to find good people to be in there. These people have to be personable, they have to be able to work with the committee, because it is going to take a lot of people on the committee. They cannot make enemies, because if they do, they are in big trouble, and there are a lot of little factors like this that are very difficult to control." Besides the campaign committee chairperson, the superintendent also considered the board president to be a key person in the whole process, labeling both the committee chairperson and the board president as good, strong leaders who did a good job of communicating.

Role of the School Board

School board members were very cognizant of all laws dealing with

campaign ethics and open meetings. This was one of the reasons the board as a whole took a position of leadership in planning for the facility and in accomplishing the legal matters required of the board, but of remaining somewhat in the background with respect to publicly promoting the bond issue. This position was regarded both positively and negatively. The superintendent believed there was good leadership from the board. The board was united in its support of the bond issue, members attended public meetings, and the superintendent said board members listened to the ideas and concerns of the public, which helped with the success of the election. On the other side, the board president said some people thought board members should have been involved beyond the legal matters, attendance at public meetings, presentation of factual information as needed, and responding to questions raised about the bond issue.

Role of School Staff

The board president said efforts were made to involve staff members in the bond issue campaign, because their positive attitude toward the project would be recognized by students, who in turn would convey a positive attitude toward the bond issue to their parents. As with everyone else, staff members had to handle their support cautiously so as to stay in compliance with campaign ethics laws. The superintendent stated that staff involvement was real good and that they did a real good job of promoting it from the standpoint of getting out, talking to people, attending meetings, and that sort of thing. The

staff understood the need. Of all the groups of people, they understood it better than any, having to teach under those circumstances.

Citizens

The campaign committee was comprised largely of volunteer citizens who came to understand the politics involved with the bond issue. Committee members got other people involved who did calling and who made presentations to various groups. Members, and the committee chairperson in particular, gave presentations to the senior citizens, community organizations, and other groups, large and small, which was regarded as very important to the success of the bond issue.

Power Structures within the District

In general there were no identifiable power structures within the district. The district had been reorganized for a relatively short period of time when the bond issue was proposed, so some feelings still existed that there were factions within the district. The campaign committee and district leaders had to make patrons feel they were part of one district instead of two separate ones. The geographic distance between the far ends of the district also presented another obstacle that had to be overcome. If any semblance of a power structure existed, it resided in the farmers. However, there was no mass support or opposition, despite strong feelings from farmers on both sides of the bond issue.

Supporters

The committee chairperson thought many people realized that something

had to be done. Committee members had their research in order to show the patrons that one neighboring district had higher taxes overall, even with the proposed bond issue in District A. In another neighboring district, a bond issue had recently passed, but the end result would be two remodeled facilities instead of two new facilities as District A would have. The superintendent reported that many supporters would approach campaign members of the superintendent, telling them to contact certain people who had questions or concerns about the bond issue. The superintendent was convinced that the personal, one-on-one contact made a big difference in the outcome.

Opponents

The interviewees had different views on how opponents perceived the bond issue. The board president cited the agricultural community as significant because they would pay the brunt of the bond issue through property taxes. The board president said it was important to anticipate this negative response, to have factual information in place, and to answer everybody's question honestly, even if it was negative toward the bond issue.

The superintendent heard opponents state that the administrators were perceived as, "feathering our own nest, or trying to empire build, or trying to power base, or whatever." Some opponents also asserted that nothing would be built and that the money would go to increase teacher salaries. Another faction favored building one K-12 facility in the middle of the district in the country, but that discussion subsided when they found out how much it was

going to cost for the sewer system and a water field. When those people realized it was going to cost an additional million dollars just to do that, their enthusiasm quickly waned.

The committee chairperson found many people with considerable credibility in the district were fighting the bond issue. Geographic distance became a point of contention, especially when one district community was not going to have an attendance center. Even though optimism existed for attracting people from the city to the smaller community, some opponents maintained the district was not "going to be big enough to be a viable district for long enough--in twenty years they'll be putting corn in these buildings, because there will not be anything else to use them for."

Informing the Public about the Bond Issue

The media played a significant role in the bond issue campaign. The close proximity to a large city, which district leaders hoped would help attract people to live in the district, also brought out media coverage from the city daily newspaper and television stations. The committee chairperson thought the newspaper was fair to everyone in its coverage. On the other hand, the committee chairperson cautioned about television, as he was interviewed for over an hour by a television reporter who used only a small segment of the interview, which came out in a negative manner toward the bond issue campaign.

Besides the media coverage, the campaign committee conducted town

meetings which were poorly attended. Informational brochures showing tax rates, showing the need, and showing the proposed designs were developed with factual information, and these were available at every meeting as well as locations throughout the district. In disseminating information, the board president emphasized the need to always tell the truth: "Do not exaggerate, do not do anything like that, because if you do, you are going to get called on it. Without a doubt, you will." Factual information also was provided in the local newspaper and in the monthly school newsletter.

Three public meetings were held in different locations in the district. Attendance was not good, but they provided opportunities to distribute brochures, answer questions, and listen to ideas and concerns. Listening to patrons, especially after the two prior failed bond issue elections, was key to rearranging the building plans which ultimately resulted in the successful election.

Another spontaneous way of distributing the word about the bond issue came from students. According to the superintendent, students organized on their own, went door-to-door, talked to people individually, and held rallies to show their support.

Focus

The focus of the information regarding the bond issue was on students and what was good for kids. The superintendent stated that people understood this very well. What patrons did not understand was the cost to individuals, how

long the bonded indebtedness would last, and what people were getting for the investment. These issues were addressed. The superintendent felt people finally came to understand that farmers cannot farm like they used to, they cannot use the two-row corn picker and farm like they did, and that a combine now is used, so it was not practical to expect to conduct school as it was in those days.

The board president contended the focus was on practical matters associated with the bond issue: need, what size was necessary, inadequate facilities, and high building maintenance costs over the last year. As far as benefits for students, the board president felt that was a nebulous concept, especially to most regular patrons. The campaign committee and board members tried to explain what was inadequate and that the rooms were the wrong configuration for the methods being used in the elementary now, with a lot of kids working in groups. The old buildings were designed for somebody to stand up in front and lecture to the kids, which was not conducive for laboratory experiences and other activity based instructional methods.

Specific Strategies That Were Helpful

Following the most recent unsuccessful bond election, campaign committee members made an extra effort to seek out those who opposed that bond issue. Committee members listened to their concerns and tried to address as many of the concerns as possible in the plan which ultimately did succeed. Personal contact with individuals in some manner and in several ways was

critical to the campaign: door-to-door contacts; developing signs, making them available as desired, putting them up throughout the district; and working individually with undecided voters to convince them to support the bond issue.

Unexpected Events

During the time of the bond issue campaign, a new law was passed which allowed school districts in a county to present a request to the county supervisors to hold an election for a one-cent sales tax in the county, the proceeds of which could be used for facilities needs by the school districts. Even though it had not passed by the time of the bond issue election, the consensus was that it would pass, which was worth approximately \$250,000 to District A. Suddenly a new source of funding was going to be available to further enhance the proposed bond issue.

A second unexpected activity was the support from the students, as described previously. They were totally on their own, but they had significant influence on many voters.

Some unexpected negative events also occurred, with the consensus centering on blatant misinformation. Patrons would send letters to the newspaper with inaccurate information, but for people who relied on the newspaper, they tended to believe what they read. Some of the vocal opposition did end up turning off some of their backers, as the board president knew some people who became supporters of the bond issue just because a vocal opponent had become negative in dealing with the issues.

Laws Affecting School Bond Issue Campaigns and Elections

Several laws were important in the District A bond issue campaign:

1. The limitation of 5% of assessed valuation hurt. The superintendent contends, "We are not building the kind of building we need to build because we have a bond issue limitation. I do not know if it would have been much different one way or the other, but the limitation hurt."
2. Just as the limitation restricted plans, the new law for the one-cent option sales tax afforded the opportunity to do more than had been included in the plan.
3. The committee chairperson and the board president both supported the 60% supermajority in law. They maintained that if the plan was a good one, the people would support it.
4. The campaign ethics laws were strictly followed, but they also may have influenced the school board to maintain a low profile throughout the election.

Recommendations Regarding Laws

The opinions about recommending changes to laws pertaining to school bond elections were quite mixed. Suggestions dealing with laws included:

1. Open enrollment. The superintendent favored eliminating the open enrollment law because of the difficulty in predicting the school population on a long-term basis.

2. Two ballot questions when exceeding a levy of \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. The consensus was that this confused voters, and there were cases where the bond issue had passed, but the second question on the ballot to fund the bond issue had failed.
3. The 60% supermajority. The superintendent strongly opposed the supermajority stating, "I was under the impression we were in a democracy here, and that my vote was equal to your vote, and yet that is not the case. If you and I vote on different sides of that issue, one of us has a third better chance, a 33% higher probability of succeeding." The committee chairperson preferred to retain the supermajority, "If it is a good enough idea, and a good enough reason to do it, there ought to be 60% of the people vote for it. Too many things can happen with a 50% vote." The board president saw merits both ways, but in the end was more in favor of retaining the supermajority because, "I really think if you have a plan that is good, if you have a need that is real, if you cannot convince 60% of the people that you need it, maybe it should not be. I am happy with the 60%. If you are justified in asking the people to spend all this money on something, maybe you had better have 60% of them in favor of it."

Other Recommendations

Experience was a good teacher, and each of the interviewees provided insights into recommendations they would have for others pursuing a bond issue. The superintendent urged superintendents to stay in the background, to provide information, to be a guiding force behind the scenes, but not to lead the charge due to misconceptions about motives for doing so. Another critical factor was to make sure that all board members were on the same page, united as a board, and acted as a board, not as individuals. Strong leadership was needed on the campaign committee, and while the committee needed to be representative of the district, it should not be too large.

The committee chairperson and the board president echoed the need for people to be involved, especially on the campaign committee. People needed to get out, make the personal contacts, listen to what patrons are saying, and provide accurate, factual information. The board president also felt it was a waste of time trying to convince negative voters to change. The recommendation was to get information to the undecided voters and to try to persuade them to become positive voters.

What Interviewees Would Change or Keep the Same in Future Bond Issues

From the perspective of the superintendent, the chairperson of the campaign committee must be the right person, one who was motivated and would push others to make things happen. As for personal involvement, the superintendent would maintain the same low profile, facilitative role as was

done in this election.

The committee chairperson would encourage board members to be actively involved and highly visible within the limitations of the laws. The chairperson also advised to consider all options for the project, listening to patrons through the personal contacts. The committee was a key to the bond issue campaign, due to the amount of work that was required and the need to make the necessary contacts to provide information to patrons at every possible opportunity.

The board president felt each situation would dictate the course of action to take. Again, the people on the campaign committee were vital in assessing the pulse of the district. The board president also reiterated the need to be as factual and honest as possible throughout the bond issue process.

District B

District B was comprised of multiple communities covering 154 square miles. The economy was based in agriculture, but the land was not the stereotypical black soil considered to predominate in Iowa. Thus the agriculture land did not have the value that existed in other parts of the state.

Need for New Facilities

District B followed the pattern of school districts in need of new facilities due to aging buildings. In one of the district communities, the middle school had been built in 1922. In a second district community, an older portion of the school facilities had been closed by the fire marshall. An interesting factor in

District B was the fact that in one of the district towns, an elementary school had been built in the 1950s consisting only of classrooms. The intent at the time of that construction was to eventually add to the structure, but it had not been accomplished during the intervening time period. The campaign committee chairperson also pointed out that the use of classrooms for ICN, computer labs, resource rooms, and other components of the educational program led to some crowded areas in district buildings.

Community Economic Factors

Even though the district was considered to be largely agriculturally based, there was a base of industry in one community. According to the superintendent, the salaries of the workers generally ranged from \$7.00 to \$10.00. As a result of the lower wages, the district had almost 40% of the students receiving free or reduced meal benefits. However, all interviewees felt there was good support all socioeconomic categories for the school bond issue.

Demographic Characteristics of the Community

The campaign committee chairperson indicated that many people felt the bond issue would be too hard on the farmers in the district. This was explained to patrons by saying, "We are just working with the system that the state allows us to work with. We cannot change the laws." Another concern which developed early in the bond issue campaign was the distribution of the tax base. In researching this, the school board members discovered that 43% of the tax base for the entire district came from the portion of the district which had

formerly been the smaller district prior to reorganization. The school board member felt that recognition of this fact, which led to a new facility in that community, was significant in the passage of the bond issue.

With respect to the assessed valuation in the district, the superintendent characterized the district as somewhat "property poor" due to farm land that was not as valuable as farm land in other parts of Iowa. This fact meant that the tax rates were higher per person than those found in neighboring districts. The superintendent said this was well-known in the district, and that even though the bond issue raised the rates even higher, these issues were not factors in the election. The committee chairperson also speculated that the dwindling number of farmers resulted in a smaller block of voters who could have opposed the bond issue.

In recognition of the "property poor" status of the district, school board members initially worked to keep the tax levy request for the bond issue within the \$2.70 limit. As the planning progressed, the school board member stated, "It was obvious from when we first formed the committees that our needs were going to be a lot more than what we could levy for (with \$2.70). So you either do it in steps, or you trim it down, cut back, or basically cheat the educational part of it in order to keep the mill levy something manageable." In the end, the school board requested close to the \$4.05 maximum for the bond issue in order to meet the educational needs which had been identified by patrons in public meetings throughout the district.

Enrollment

In the early to mid 1990s, district enrollment increased. That trend was reversed beginning with the 1997-98 school year, looked to continue in decline for approximately five years as larger classes graduated, and should level off following that period of time. The superintendent stated that open enrollment numbers due to the aging facilities could decrease when the new facilities have been completed, and this would help stabilize the enrollment.

The committee chairperson felt the enrollment issue was significant, and the committee made certain the issue was addressed in the bond issue campaign information. While classrooms were needed for programs that had not been offered previously, the declining enrollment did not afford the opportunity to reduce the number of sections of classes throughout the system. As the chairperson attested, "Show people what you are doing now that you were not doing 20 years ago that takes up space. My point as well was you have a history class with 30 kids in, and an English class with 30 kids in, and they are in separate rooms. Well, now maybe there are only 25 kids in this class and 25 kids in this class, but we still need a separate room."

Size of the Bond Issue

The size of the bond issue impacted the bond issue campaign. Three previous bond issues had failed, and according to the superintendent, each subsequent time the bond issue was presented to voters, it was higher due to estimated increased costs of construction. The committee chairperson said

there were community patrons who felt the construction should occur in stages, but that was dismissed based on the previous pledge to take the same course of action some 40 years earlier, and that pledge remained unfulfilled.

Committee members and district leaders maintained their focus on educational needs which had to be met, and ultimately the size of the bond issue did not deter passage at the election.

Planning and Organization Associated with the Bond Issue Campaign

The superintendent and school board member felt the planning for the bond issue started several years before the successful bond issue was presented to the voters. That process, which was driven by the school board, began with smaller committees that researched several aspects of the total school system: curriculum; special education; technology; facilities; educational philosophy; and finance. This exercise was key to the eventual success of the bond issue election in the eyes of the school board member who said, "We did a lot of things right, I think, and we did some things wrong. Some of the things we did right were the committee system. I think that was a very good exercise in getting the public involved in what they wanted their education for the community to look like in 20 years, or five years, or two years." In pursuing the earlier bond issues, the school board allowed the campaign committee to be the leading force working for passage of the issue. However, after the failed bond issue elections, the school board listened to patrons, many of whom wanted the school board and the superintendent to assume a leadership role in

making the necessary decisions and in explaining the needs to district patrons.

In response to district patrons, the board conducted focus group sessions. Patrons were invited to attend these meetings and break into small groups to discuss issues related to the failed bond issues and to present ideas on what it would take to result in a successful bond issue election. This was a major opportunity for community patrons to have input into the process, and the school board member considered the focus groups to be instrumental in leading to the successful election: "In order to get the snowball rolling in the right direction, the focus groups, I think, helped immensely. We tried to invite people who were openly opposed to any bond issue, and we tried to get a cross-section of age and ethnicity." At the focus group meetings, each group consisted of ten people, a school secretary as the group recorder, and a facilitator from the area education agency. The board and the superintendent did not participate in the meetings. Participants in the focus groups recognized the need for new facilities, and based on the findings from the meetings, the plan which eventually led to the successful bond issue election was developed by the school board.

Campaign Committee

The campaign committee took the information from the school board and set up the bond issue campaign to focus on what board members had developed and what had been learned from the participants in the focus groups. The committee chairperson changed strategies from previous bond

issues as well. The chairperson had spearheaded previous bond issue campaign committees and realized the need to delegate more responsibility to others. As the chairperson endorsed, "The more people you can get involved, the better off you are." Subcommittees were formed, with heads of the subcommittee responsible for reporting on progress to the total campaign committee. The committee chairperson facilitated fund-raising efforts, but in general, there was considerably more community involvement in the successful bond issue campaign than there had been in earlier campaigns.

Leadership

The leaders during the bond issue campaign assumed distinct roles, based on the needs identified by listening to district patrons. The superintendent felt that building trust among the people was his major responsibility. Community patrons in the focus groups indicated they wanted to hear the superintendent speak on the issues, and the superintendent fulfilled this responsibility by speaking to any and all groups possible. The superintendent served as a facilitator to the school board and to the campaign committee, providing them with information throughout the campaign.

The school board member asserted that the board took a more proactive role in the successful bond issue campaign than they had in previous campaigns. This was evidenced by the focus groups which were instigated by the school board and by school board members serving as speakers at organized meetings and gatherings which were less formal. A key leadership

factor from the school board was unity in support of the bond issue in the successful election.

The committee chairperson assumed responsibilities which were designed to promote the bond issue by providing information to the public through flyers, news articles, and meetings. The chairperson headed fund-raising efforts and was in charge of the telephone calling campaign to register voters and to remind them to vote on election day. One of the fund-raising techniques was what the chairperson termed an "advertiser" paper in which businesses were charged when they put their ad in it. The chairperson especially liked the unity displayed through this technique: "What worked really well was that we had at that time three banks and a savings and loan, and we got them all to be in the same ad. So, we had a picture of the president of each, and they are all standing next together and saying, 'We compete, but for this, we can all pull together.' They would give a donation to have their ad in the paper." A considerable amount of factual information also was contained in the paper, and the ads helped pay for the printing costs.

Key Person

The perception of the individuals who were vital to the success of the bond issue campaign was similar among the interviewees. The school board member and the superintendent both agreed that the committee chairperson was a key figure. Both cited the chairperson's work ethic and willingness to respond to the input from citizens as critical in the success of the campaign and

election. By leading the campaign committee into a more supportive role in the background during the successful campaign, the board and superintendent assumed the roles which community patrons wanted to see them have. They took the plans to meetings, explained what was to occur, and answered all questions pertaining to the bond issue, which was a direct result of the input received during the focus group meetings.

Role of the School Board

The school board member summed up the evolution of the school board by stating, "We took a more proactive role in the last bond issue. We had more board meetings, work sessions, to discuss what we were going to present to the people and the focus groups. There were board people present at those. Letters to the editor. We seemed to get a lot of more community support." Board unity was evident in the successful bond issue campaign, and they demonstrated this by complete involvement in each aspect of the successful campaign.

Role of School Staff

The school board member credited the staff with playing a main role in the successful bond election, "I do not think the staff was totally behind our first two bond issues, but they came out publicly with letters and personally that they needed to pass this bond issue. It was clear that the staff wanted to pass the bond issue. Before it was not clear that the staff wanted to pass a bond issue. The staff being at the forefront was a huge key." According to the

superintendent, an internal campaign was conducted to get the staff members behind the bond issue. In previous elections, staff members had cross referenced the names of all the parents of all their students against the voter registration list, found out who was registered and who was not, tried to get people registered to vote, and explained why patrons needed to vote in favor of the bond issue. This information carried over to the successful bond election. Another part of staff involvement was in reviewing plans and defining needs for the educational program which were used in developing plans with the architect.

Citizens

Citizen leaders were key contributors during the successful bond issue campaign. Working with the patrons in the respective school communities within the district became a focus, and once some issues were resolved along those lines, progress was made. Compromise and focus on what was needed in the interests of quality education led to the final product, for as the school board member said, "There was not a person involved in the whole process that could say this is exactly the way I want it to be, but this is the way it is going to be. There is no way we are going to get everybody to say, 'This is exactly what I want'."

Another manner of highly effective citizen connection to the bond issue campaign involved newspaper ads. One type of newspaper ad campaign contained pictures of people and two or three sentences about their reasons for

supporting the bond issue. The committee chairperson felt this was effective because, "...it was more personal, more not so much being pushed by this little cadre of people who were close to the school board and the teachers and the superintendent, but just your average, everyday citizen. They tried to go through the whole gamut from kids maybe just out of school to senior citizens."

Power Structures within the District

The committee chairperson and the superintendent did not feel there were any power structures in the district. The school board member cited a group of influential citizens in one of the district communities that felt all attendance centers should be consolidated into one community. This group did not have a formal organizational structure and did not have an impact on the outcome of the election. Another group which had some impact on decisions associated with the bond issue was comprised of patrons who open enrolled their children to neighboring districts. The school board member felt the number of open enrolled children may have influenced some people to realize the bond issue plan was in the best interests of the total district and to vote in favor of the bond issue.

Supporters

The school board strategy of using focus groups apparently satisfied the desires of many community patrons. In discussing what he heard from people in the communities, the superintendent learned that patrons felt their voices were being heard: "In the last bond issue, everybody felt it would pass. They

felt better about running it. They liked the plans. They liked that we listened to the focus groups. They liked the trust that was being developed. They felt better about the school. That is they feedback I got." The school board member cited more supportive letters to the newspaper editor, the purchase of newspaper ads by business people in support of the bond issue, and definite local newspaper support as factors that impacted the election outcome.

The superintendent, school board members, and campaign committee members also received more encouragement during the successful bond issue campaign. People who previously had not done so publicly came out in support of the bond issue. According to the school board member, "We had some key individuals that were not afraid to speak up or put an editorial in the paper or make a few phone calls or visit people personally, and tell them about the pros and cons." While all of the interviewees felt there had been good support in previous bond issue campaigns, they thought the level of support had intensified during the successful campaign, and that was important to the success of the election.

Opponents

Acceptance of opposition to a bond issue was a difficult concept, but the committee chairperson acknowledged that there were people who simply would not support a bond issue, or other ballot issues, regardless of how many of their concerns were addressed. As the chairperson cited, "A lot of it was, we finally decided, there are certain people who will find a reason to vote 'no,' and if you

fix that reason, they'll find another one. We had people voting 'no' because they did not like the superintendent. We had people voting 'no' because they thought the teachers got paid too much. Those kinds of reasons are excuses." At the same time, the committee chairperson said they listened to people who could address aspects of the plan that caused concern and explain the reasons for having certain components in the plan. Throughout the bond issue campaign, however, there was not organized opposition to the bond issue.

As was expected, much of the opposition came from the agricultural constituents in the district who would receive a large property tax increase. In listening to their concerns, the superintendent realized, "They support it in their heart, though." People acknowledged that a mixture of property tax with income tax would have been more widely accepted, but they came to understand that the laws did not allow this option at the time of the bond issue election.

A final factor which was a potential stumbling block was the significant number of district resident students who attended a private school outside of the district. Parents of those students questioned why they should be expected to support the bond issue, but some of these parents also were involved in the focus groups, where it was recognized by participants that new facilities were needed. In the end, the committee chairperson did not believe the private school issue was a factor in the final outcome.

Informing the Public about the Bond Issue

"The Time Is Right" was the theme of the bond issue campaign. The

committee chairperson said the idea came from a brainstorming session based on several favorable developments: low interest rates low at the time; failure to pass earlier bond issues; and persistence, in that patrons seemed to realize that school leaders and citizen supporters would continue to pursue a bond issue until one was passed. The committee chairperson thought the persistence factor was most reflected in the fact that the number of "yes" votes in the successful bond election was only two more than in the previous election, but that the number of "no" votes decreased by approximately 140 votes.

The school board member and the superintendent considered the focus groups as the beginning of the efforts to develop an informed public on the successful bond issue campaign. The participants in the first focus group meeting were invited to assure certain kinds of representation: Christian school patrons, people who openly opposed the last bond issue that did not pass, young people just out of high school, senior citizens, and representation from all communities in the district. Planning was done by school board members based on input from those meetings, and this information then was returned to the public during the bond issue campaign.

Radio and television stations were not local and therefore were not factors in disseminating information about the bond issue campaign. The superintendent used the public access cable television channel, as he and the campaign committee developed a videotape presentation in which the superintendent explained the plans, and this tape was played on the access

channel. Feedback about this presentation to the superintendent was positive, because patrons could see the plans in their homes and enter into discussion about the plans with their families and friends in their homes instead of going to the school or some other central location.

An informational flyer was developed by the campaign committee, and the flyer was sent out to patrons and also provided to attendees at meetings, wherever the meetings were conducted. The flyer provided a consistent base of information which allowed speakers to give the same factual information to every group, regardless of who was speaking and which group was being addressed. As stated previously, during the successful bond issue campaign, the superintendent and board members assumed the responsibility for speaking to groups at meetings wherever they could be invited to attend.

During the successful bond issue campaign, the newspaper provided open support. The committee chairperson worked closely with the newspaper editor to develop the flyer. Board members supplied individual letters to the newspaper during the weeks preceding the election explaining the bond issue and asking for voter support in the election.

Perhaps the overriding method of providing information to the public was through personal contact. Campaign committee members were urged to visit with friends, relatives, and neighbors individually, with the philosophy that if a relationship already existed with a voter, that person was more likely to listen to a committee member who could explain the issue and answer questions. The

superintendent also considered the personal contact by high school students and recent graduates with other recent graduates as tremendously successful, and this method brought in several absentee votes from those in college.

Focus

Throughout the bond issue campaign, information was focused on benefits for students and what was needed to continue to provide a quality educational program. According to the superintendent, few questions surfaced about the need for new facilities, as the understanding seemed to exist that remodeling buildings of that age was not financially sensible. Remodeling would not have resolved a size problem with some rooms, and remodeling would not have provided the facilities which had been promised as part of the bond issue 40 years earlier. The new facilities addressed the need to consolidate from four school buildings to three, with resulting efficiencies in personnel and energy.

Specific Strategies That Were Helpful

The school board member viewed the community-driven process as the most successful part of the overall bond issue campaign. Even though the process may have been controversial at times, the board member still said it was needed, "You got to have a community-driven school. It gets cumbersome involving so many people, but it is still a process you have to go through, I think." Community support was cited by the superintendent and the committee chairperson, who considered the ads with individual pictures and a few

sentences by the individual about the reasons for supporting the bond issue as very effective and helping to personalize the bond issue campaign.

Unexpected Events

As a result of changing the campaign strategy to focus only on positive reasons for new facilities, the superintendent said there were no unexpected events. In a previous campaign, a video had been developed showing areas of concern, and patrons in the focus groups explained that this strategy actually had a negative impact on many people because bringing out the negatives irritated people. According to each of the interviewees, prior to each election, whether a school election or other election, an individual who was assumed to have been a community member would mail a letter to all patrons in the district. The letter, which actually was no longer unexpected, contained misinformation, and the interviewees did not feel the letter at the time of the bond election influenced any patrons to change their vote.

Laws Affecting School Bond Issue Campaigns and Elections

In District B, the following laws influenced the bond issue campaign:

1. The legal maximum bonded indebtedness of 5% of assessed valuation was a hindrance according to the school board member, as needs still existed, even with the plans for the new facilities.
2. The law requiring two ballot questions for a bond issue which exceeded the \$2.70 levy almost caused problems in District B, as the voters approved bond issue with 64% of the vote, but the vote

to approve a tax levy not to exceed \$4.05 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation received 60.8% of the vote. An emphasis on "vote yes-yes" was made in all of the ads for the bond issue.

3. The school board member said many people would have preferred a mix of income taxes and property taxes to fund the bond issue, but such provisions were not options at the time of the bond election.
4. The superintendent expected some kind of challenge on a campaign ethics matter from the individual who mailed the letters just prior to the election, but none came about. The committee chairperson said the committee was careful to follow all campaign ethics laws and that one person on the committee was responsible for handling the money that was raised and filing the necessary reports to the Campaign Ethics Office.

Recommendations Regarding Laws

The interviewees were split on any potential recommendations for changes to laws. The superintendent and the campaign committee chairperson both agreed that the 60% supermajority approval should be changed. The committee chairperson felt very strongly that the supermajority was, "...letting 40% of your population tell you what to do. To me it does not make any sense. To me, that is not the way our Constitution is set up. I do not think just because it involves money you need a bigger percentage. I do not like that at all. I think

you are letting minority rule, and I do not think that is right." On the other hand, the school board member favored leaving the 60% supermajority requirement, stating, "It is healthy to have that, to make sure we go through the process of doing it right, to justify, so that school districts just are not able to propose something and have it pass marginally by 51% or 52%, and then find out later it was not the right thing."

The requirement for a second ballot question to exceed the \$2.70 levy, up to a maximum of \$4.05 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation brought mixed reactions. The superintendent favored changing the law to make it easier for people to understand. The committee chairperson thought having certain levels in law was positive, but that the existing \$2.70 and \$4.05 levels were low in light of current construction costs. The school board member wanted to establish a tax rate level at which state assistance would enter the bond issue if certain conditions could be developed, such as low assessed valuation per pupil or some other determinant of the ability to pay for needed facilities. The board member thought income surtax could be one consideration in helping property-poor districts fund new facilities.

A final recommendation was proposed by the committee chairperson regarding the use of a sales tax to pay for infrastructure needs. The chairperson does not favor a sales tax for schools as was passed by the 1998 General Assembly, whereby the sales tax money generated in a county is prorated among the school districts in the county based on the number of county resident

students attending each district. The chairperson contended, "Do not just let the urban trade areas take money from the entire state and put it in just those districts, because that is what is happening. I know at the mall in the city, there are many cars that are not from that county. Let's take money from everybody, and let's benefit everybody." If a statewide sales tax for school use was implemented, the chairperson would favor an equalizing formula that would make adjustments for variations in taxable valuations, with increased funding channeled to districts that have a low taxable valuation per pupil.

Other Recommendations

The interviewees had few additional recommendations. The superintendent reiterated the need to build trust for the board and administration throughout the district and the need to be in the forefront during the bond issue campaign, with an emphasis on as much personal contact as possible through meetings and other opportunities. The committee chairperson brought out the need for persistence and listening to the people, stating, "Do not give up after the first time if it does not pass. Find out what people did not like, make some changes, and come back with it. Do not let people get the idea that they can vote 'no' once and that it is going to go away, because they will get that idea." The school board member considered architects to be somewhat cumbersome in the entire process, even though the understanding of the need to have an architect existed. When compared with the manner in which private schools can negotiate on building projects, the board member preferred to have

more flexibility than currently available to public entities.

What Interviewees Would Change or Keep the Same in Future Bond Issues

The superintendent reemphasized the need for a quality campaign committee and for a united school board. A continuous public relations program involving writing articles for the newspaper and being part of community groups was important to the superintendent. The final point from the superintendent was to have support from the school staff, not only at school, but in the community and with their friends.

The committee chairperson stressed the need for a unified board and a sufficient time frame in which to deal with issues effectively. Involvement of many community people helped achieve a broad base of support. Planning and organization, from the focus groups to the campaign committee to the manner of disseminating information, were key factors in the successful bond issue election.

The school board member liked the focus group process, even though it contributed to a longer time frame for the total bond issue campaign. The length of time caused some people to lose interest in the bond issue, according to the board member. As with the other interviewees, the board member emphasized the need for communication at all levels and the need for key community individuals to come to the forefront in support of the bond issue. The board member said they plan to continue the use of focus groups on other matters as a means of ongoing communication between the school and the district patrons.

District C

District C encompassed 190 square miles with an economy based largely on agriculture. Significant industrial development in the district contributed to an assessed valuation base that was above the state average. A unique factor in the District C bond issue was that no regular school buildings were closed or eliminated as a result of the bond issue. Changes to the grade level organizational structure of the district resulted in two elementary buildings with fewer grade levels than had been in the buildings previously, a middle school for grades 5-8 in the former high school, and grades 9-12 in the new high school. The only facilities which were eliminated were four portable buildings which had been used for special classes in the elementary grades.

Need for New Facilities

The interviewees indicated that 10 bond issues had failed in District C over the past 25 years. Various proposals had been presented to voters during that time period, but the failed bond issues had forced district officials to use stop-gap measures to meet needs, including the use of four portable units which were becoming dilapidated due to the heavy student use. The superintendent said the bond issue was "...driven by a lack of appropriate space for the delivery of the diverse programs we have." The high school building at the time of the bond issue election had been built in 1923 and housed grades 7-12. The building was crowded with six grade levels, and district leaders felt they were unable to meet the needs of current middle school and high school

educational programs such as special education, technology, gifted education, tutorial programs, and men's and women's athletics.

Community Economic Factors

The board president acknowledged that the socioeconomic status of district patrons had changed over the 25 year period. The population at one time had a high concentration of what the board president called "educated people," who were primarily engineers for some companies in the district. At the time of the successful bond election, the board president indicated the community had more blue-collar workers. However, the percentage of students receiving free or reduced meal benefits was approximately half of the state average, which indicated a higher level of income in general among district patrons. All of the interviewees agreed that the overall socioeconomic status of district patrons had no impact on the outcome of the successful bond election.

Demographic Characteristics of the Community

In previous bond issue campaigns, significant opposition had been present from the farmers in the district. While some farmers remained opposed to the bond issue because of its impact on property taxes, they were not as influential in the successful bond issue campaign. Two factors may have reduced the impact of the agricultural opposition over the years: a reduced number of farmers and an increase in the number of workers within the industries in the district.

District C was fortunate to have a high assessed property valuation per

student, partially due to the industrial base in the district. As a result, the superintendent said the tax rate at the time of the election was under \$12.00 per thousand dollars of taxable valuation, which compared favorably with neighboring and conference districts which had tax rates from \$16.00 to \$17.00. Another advantage for District C was that the last successful bond issue had been paid off in 1980, so patrons had several years of taxation used strictly to meet the regular, ongoing needs of the school. School officials had used tax levies to maintain district facilities, and the district had a favorable financial position at the time of the bond election.

Enrollment

The enrollment in District C had been stable over the ten-year period leading up to the bond issue. The interviewees stated that the stable enrollment did not force the bond issue election, even though buildings were crowded, but as the superintendent pointed out, "The stability gave us confidence to move into the future." The campaign committee chairperson regarded the revised school organizational structure and the new high school facility as drawing points which will increase the number of students who open enroll into the district.

Size of the Bond Issue

Some school leaders were concerned about the size of the bond issue. In previous elections, board members felt community patrons would not support a bond issue which exceed the \$2.70 tax levy limit for a one-question ballot.

The campaign committee chairperson recognized the dilemma of the board stating, "The school board was a little hesitant, and the decision had to be made. Well, do you buy a Ford or do you buy a Cadillac? And the school board had to make that decision, and the input they received was that if you are going to buy it, let's buy a Cadillac." Once the board decided to allow voters to determine whether or not to exceed the \$2.70 tax levy, plans fell into place. The superintendent said school officials and board members were concerned that the size of the bond issue, which was the legally allowed maximum of 5% of the assessed valuation, would scare voters. The superintendent said that once people were told that a new high school would be built, community support was almost instantaneous, because people wanted a facility of which they could be proud, and they wanted it to be a new high school. The result, according to the superintendent, was that in every public meeting, no one complained about the size of the bond issue.

Planning and Organization Associated with the Bond Issue Campaign

In the time leading up to the bond election, a positive climate existed in the district in terms of cooperation among city leaders, county leaders, and the planning board. These leaders and other groups delayed projects because there was consensus throughout the school district that school facilities would be the top priority. Considerable planning and public relations work had been required to reach this consensus, but the superintendent regarded it as crucial to the success of the bond issue election. Two additional significant factors

evolved during the course of the bond issue campaign. A positive agricultural environment helped quell opposition from that sector, and low interest rates for the bonds resulted in getting more building for their money.

Campaign Committee

The bond issue campaign used the theme of KIDS, Keep Improving District Schools. The campaign committee became known as the KIDS Committee and was comprised of 10 to 12 community people who were hand-picked for their responsibilities. According to the committee chairperson, meetings started on a bi-monthly basis, and as they approached the election day, meetings became weekly and even twice a week just prior to the election. The first couple of meetings were organizational in nature to determine who the committee needed to get involved and to solicit people to serve on the various subcommittees. Subcommittees were identified to cover the following topics: phone surveys, endorsements, voter registration, information dissemination, fund-raising, and absentee ballots. By the time subcommittee members were identified, the board president estimated that approximately 200 people were involved in the bond issue campaign.

Leadership

Strong leadership was evident at all levels in District C. Once the perceived hurdle of exceeding the \$2.70 tax levy rate was removed, school board members were totally unified in working for the bond issue. Discussion occurred among themselves to iron out issues, but upon leaving a meeting, the

superintendent stated that the board members spoke as one voice in support of the bond issue.

The board president cited the leadership of the superintendent in guiding the board through the entire process. The superintendent was a vital link between the KIDS Committee and the board, maintaining open lines of communication to keep everyone informed of progress throughout the bond issue campaign. The superintendent helped lead the board through the processes of hiring an architect and creating the facility plan. The superintendent assisted in recruiting people to serve on the KIDS Committee along with the associated subcommittees and served as an advisor to the KIDS Committee chairpersons and to the heads of each subcommittee. According to the superintendent, all of these responsibilities were carried out behind the scenes rather than being in the forefront of the activities.

The superintendent considered the KIDS Committee chairperson to be an expert in keeping all everyone progressing according to the identified time frame. The chairperson provided the KIDS Committee with valuable resources throughout the campaign in terms of copy machines, mailings, secretary calls to remind people to attend the meetings, a conference room for meetings, and even some expertise from employees in the chairperson's place business. Another significant factor the chairperson brought to the committee was influence with a broad spectrum of district patrons, based on having lived in the district for a lifetime and developing a business which was recognized

nationally and internationally.

Key Person

Based on the interviews, the superintendent appeared to be the person who was the main communicator, albeit with a "behind the scenes" approach. The superintendent kept board members, KIDS Committee members, and staff informed regarding progress on the bond issue. The superintendent also assumed the responsibility for keeping the board focused on the ultimate goal of meeting student needs, so that when discussions would deviate from a common path, the superintendent would refocus board members on the task at hand, resulting in consensus and support as a unified body from the board.

Role of the School Board

The board president had served nine years on the board at the time of the election and considered all of the boards during that time to be positive in nature. The board was united from the beginning of the bond issue process, as the board president said, "Everybody was always thinking about the kids and about education, so that has been good." One technique of the board president was to require a place on the agenda to provide an update on school facilities. This occurred for several months prior to the beginning of the successful bond issue campaign to make sure the topic was kept in front of the board and the public in general. A key turning point for the board occurred with the school board election prior to the start of the bond issue campaign. A new board member was elected who urged the board to consider a new plan and a new

location from previous bond issues. The new member told the other board members that community patrons were more interested in a new high school than a new middle school, and that a location along a new stretch of highway was preferred over a location already owned by the district in a more remote area. With a fresh idea, the school board proceeded to develop a totally new plan for a high school which ultimately met with approval by the voters.

Role of School Staff

Staff members were used in the facility planning process to identify needs, and a concerted effort was made to keep them informed and supportive of the bond issue. One staff member served on the KIDS Committee, heading the subcommittee which worked to encourage absentee voting. This staff member had contacts with recent graduates and was generally popular with past and current students. The other major role assumed by staff members occurred on a Sunday afternoon, ten days prior to the election. Staff members put up green campaign signs throughout the community in yards where patrons had given the approval or requested them. On that Sunday afternoon, according to the superintendent, "The whole town turned green. Every marquee on the street said, 'Vote yes, do not forget to vote!'." The superintendent considered this activity to be, "...the most positive thing I had ever seen."

Citizens

The committee chairperson emphasized the importance of identifying

what the public wanted in the bond issue. In the failed bond issue elections, school leaders and committee leaders thought they had the answers. The organized opposition apparently had more answers, and the committee chairperson said the opponents were asked about the reasons they voted against the last bond issue that failed. These people also were asked to get involved and to become part of the total process. What the campaign committee discovered was that the last bond issue failed because of location and plan. Once these leaders listened to what community patrons were saying, the committee chairperson said things changed: "The voters wanted a new high school. And that is what you have to identify--what your voters want. And what your voters want, and what your school district needs are not necessarily the same thing. And it took us about 25 years to figure that out."

The board president considered the citizen involvement in the KIDS Committee vital to the success of the bond issue election. Citizens elevated the issue to such a level that it became unpopular to publicly oppose the bond issue. Sufficient numbers of voters publicly supported the bond issue in the newspaper and through advertising that committee members were confident of exceeding the 60% supermajority by a wide margin.

Power Structures within the District

The superintendent readily admitted there was a power structure in the district, and that those people comprised the KIDS Committee. Perhaps the most influential was the committee chairperson, who was a former city council

member and well connected with the people who operated industries in the district. The committee chairperson agreed with that assessment, indicating, "I do a lot of business in this community. I have a lot of friends here. I grew up here, and that does not mean I can do anything I want to do, but if we need to raise money for a cause that the community is going to support, we can do it, and it is just a matter of going out and saying we need a hundred bucks." The committee chairperson felt it was important for any committee to have someone with the "...ability to subtly twist some arms, and do it with everybody smiling so everybody feels good about it."

Another member of the power structure was the head of the calling subcommittee. This person was a retired teacher who also served as the chairperson, organizer, and administrator of the county fair, which is one of the largest in Iowa. After 30 years as a teacher in the district, this individual was well-respected by a broad spectrum of people. Others in this power structure included a banker who served as the committee treasurer, the head of a statewide camp for children with special needs who sought endorsements from business people and developed the newspaper ad campaign, and a graphics designer who designed the ad campaign and who was employed by the KIDS Committee chairperson. All members of the KIDS Committee were solicited to take advantage of their unique skills and their influence with residents of the district.

Supporters

Support for the bond issue was identified in two categories: organized and spontaneous. The organized support happened as a result of the efforts of the chairperson of the endorsement subcommittee, who was selected for the position because the organization for whom he works survives on private donations and support. The superintendent characterized this person as follows: "He is well-loved and respected in the community, and if he talks to you about supporting something, it is easy to support it." As a result of his efforts, representatives from the same or similar business came together in a pictorial and advertising show of unity in support of the bond issue. Car dealers, implement dealers, doctors, and many others who compete with each other demonstrated public unity in support of the bond issue. The subcommittee chairperson also orchestrated positive letters to the editor, so that if a negative letter appeared in the paper, three or more letters were already to the editor for publication in the same issue. The tone established through this process was so positive that an implement dealer who had opposed earlier bond issues contacted the superintendent to say, "I do not know how you have done it, but it is socially unacceptable to talk against the school bond issue."

Spontaneous support came in several forms. As the campaign committee chairperson said, "Everything you can imagine, from financial assistance, to letters to the editor, to 'I'll be glad to talk to my mother, sister, brother, father, husband,' to a lot of positive response to every aspect you could

imagine." The board president indicated that board members would toss out ideas with constituents to get reactions. For example, the roof became a major topic, with patrons strongly indicating they did not want a flat rubber roof. As a result, a standing-seam metal roof was included in the plans.

Opponents

All three interviewees agreed there was no organized opposition to the bond issue which was successful. The superintendent said there were some questions about traffic on the highway going past the location, and some residents in the area of the new facility did not like having the school across the highway from them. As the campaign committee chairperson pointed out, "After the election, you could not find anyone who would admit they voted against it."

Informing the Public about the Bond Issue

The theme for the bond issue, Keep Improving District Schools with the acronym of KIDS, came about as a result of casual conversation among campaign committee members. A local artist designed and copyrighted a logo, and the committee decided to use the green as the main color for signs because it signified "Go," instead of red, which had been used on earlier signs. As the board president concluded, "It became the saying, the slogan, to fall on. It meant something, and maybe it helped. I am sure it did. Everything adds together. I sometimes wonder what advertising does, but I think that is one place where it did."

Another positive force in spreading the word about the bond issue was

the support of the local newspaper. As the board president emphasized, "The newspaper was terrific. They jumped on early, provided coverage, and I do not know how much we had to pay for, but I think a lot of the newspaper was given to us, was donated." The newspaper editor also worked with the campaign committee in the development of a an advertising supplement in which factual information was presented. The supplement included the pictures of groups of people and individuals who supported the bond issue, but it also included a list of district patrons who approved publicly printing their names as supporters of the bond issue. This list initially appeared in a newspaper ad, and the list was expanded each week, with the opportunity for patrons to contact the school to have their name added to the list in support of the bond issue. When the supplement came out just prior to the election, over 1,000 names were on the list, and the supplement, which was originally designed to be eight pages in size, turned out to be 16 pages because of all of the endorsements contained in it.

Minimal coverage of the bond issue was provided by electronic media, due to no local radio or television stations. The superintendent stated that a couple of area stations prepared news stories and interviewed leaders of the campaign, but that form of coverage did not have a significant impact on the outcome.

Several presentations for local organizations were made, but one board member with a background suited to the task made all of them. The

superintendent attended all of the presentations in case questions were asked that the board member could not answer. In an interesting departure from the norm, only one public meeting was held at the school. The purpose was to present the facts of the bond issue. All board members, the superintendent, and the architect attended the meeting, but the superintendent said that less than 10 district patrons participated in the meeting. By the time the public meeting was held, a considerable amount of personal, one-on-one communication had been accomplished, and the superintendent attributed these efforts to the low attendance at the public meeting.

A major technique in getting information out about the bond issue and learning how much support existed for the bond issue was the telephone campaign. In a unique twist, callers would not ask patrons whether or not they supported the bond issue. Callers would identify themselves, provide a brief explanation about the bond issue according to a script, and then ask the patron whether or not they would like a KIDS sign for their yard. Based on the response, the caller would categorize the patron as a supporter, undecided, or opponent. This list constituted the locations for the staff to make the Sunday afternoon sign posting throughout the district. Following that, several people contacted a KIDS Committee member requesting a sign. If the individual had been categorized as a supporter or undecided, a sign was placed in the yard. If the individual was not a supporter but wanted a sign just for the sake of appearance, a sign was not placed in the yard. The interviewees agreed that

peer pressure among district patrons played a key role in giving the appearance of overwhelming support for the bond issue. Patrons who supported the bond issue also received green buttons with the KIDS logo.

Focus

The superintendent identified a very specific focus of bond issue information: "A yes vote here helps every kid, from kindergarten to twelfth grade in this system." The board president said the information explained to patrons that the bond issue would include everything needed for the school. Board members also wanted to make certain that there was no appearance of hiding anything, so every piece of information that went to the public would address several topics, and as questions developed during the course of the bond issue campaign, the questions were addressed, and responses were made widely available.

Specific Strategies That Were Helpful

The initial list of supporters that was published in the newspaper came from the petitions for the bond election which were submitted to the board. Each person who circulated a petition received the same directions, so that petition signers knew that signing the petition was going to serve a dual purpose: call for an election and provide a list of supporters whose names would be printed in the newspaper. In all, 70 petitions were collected, with 685 to 700 names. When the board received the petitions and set the election specifications, the names appeared in the next issue of the newspaper. The

other successful strategies employed during the bond issue campaign have been described elsewhere: the KIDS Committee, the telephone campaign, the endorsements, letters to the editor, yard signs, and the regular informational mailings.

Unexpected Events

The interviewees were unanimous in indicating there were no unexpected events. Everything was orchestrated and followed according to plans. As the board president surmised, "Once we made the decisions on this, and this, and this, things just moved forward. I do not think there were any giant setbacks."

Laws Affecting School Bond Issue Campaigns and Elections

After passing a bond issue election by a wide margin, there were no laws that had a negative impact on the election outcome. However, the interviewees identified laws which were always in the forefront as they worked through the bond issue campaign:

1. The superintendent stated the campaign ethics laws made board members, school officials, and KIDS Committee members operate very carefully so as not to violate any of the laws and jeopardize the election. According to the superintendent, "There was not a nickel of school money spent on anything like that in promotional stuff. The school sent out a special issue of the school newsletter with the facts. But all of the rest of that was funded out of that

group that met out there, and I did not even use the daytime to work on it. 7:00 to 8:00 on a Friday morning I would be with that group, but no visible change in what I was doing or what my staff was doing. We ran the school. That was a plus. Nobody could attack us on any of those matters. That thing was always kind of driving our movement."

2. Another concern was the need to have two questions on the ballot, one for the bond issue and one to exceed the \$2.70 tax levy rate. Initially, the board president felt the \$2.70 tax rate was more of a mental block for the board members, but that once the board decided to exceed that rate, concern developed over how to make sure community patrons understood the need to support both questions on the ballot. A concerted effort was made by the KIDS Committee to explain to patrons the reason to vote in favor of both ballot questions.
3. Even though the 60% supermajority was exceeded in the election, everyone was aware of the need to meet that requirement. The KIDS Committee chairperson summed it up by saying, "My personal opinion is that I do not have any problem with the 60% majority at all, because if you get the 60%, nobody can question what the results are. It is the same way with increasing the debt levy. Nobody can question what the results are. If it is 50.1% and

49.9%, that is different than if it is 60% and 40%. And in our case, it was 70% and 30%."

Recommendations Regarding Laws

The interviewees would not support changes to the 60% supermajority law for passing bond issues. The KIDS Committee chairperson emphasized, "There is no question about the voting public, how the public feels, at that 60% supermajority. Nobody can argue with that. You do not have to have a recount." The board president indicated that had a lower percentage been in effect for bond issue passage, several of the previous bond issues would have passed, but the district would not have had the quality facilities that resulted from the successful bond issue. Ultimately, the right plan garnered sufficient support to leave no doubt as to how well the community supported the school system.

The superintendent and the board president supported consideration of other ways to finance bond issues. The board president indicated that an income surtax mixed with property tax could be fairer to many district patrons, especially those engaged in farming. The superintendent, while agreeing that other methods could be available, also expressed concern on the effect that a different funding mixture could have on Moody's ratings and bond interest rates.

The requirement for a second ballot question to exceed the \$2.70 tax rate levy could be eliminated, according to the superintendent. The superintendent endorsed allowing school district patrons to determine what they wanted to

provide for facilities in a given district. As the board president questioned, "Why have to ask two questions? There again, at some time, somebody in their wisdom said that when we get above \$2.70, we better have to vote on it. You still got to say yes to spend the money, I do not know why you have to vote twice."

Other Recommendations

The KIDS Committee chairperson summarized, "Try to determine what the voting public thinks the needs are, and try to fashion your physical needs around that. All too often you get architects and school board members and superintendents that think they have the answer to everything." The results of past elections and the successful election spoke volumes as to the ability of district patrons to let board members know what they did or did not want. The board president echoed the sentiment that finding the right plan based on what people are saying was key to the eventual success of the bond election.

The superintendent cited leadership as vital to a successful bond issue election. This was evidenced in District C by a unanimously supportive board, a hand-picked and supportive KIDS Committee, carefully articulated planning, a time frame that was not rushed but not too lengthy, and a positive campaign that left opponents in the background due to the peer pressure from those who strongly endorsed the bond issue. However, as the superintendent reiterated, none of it could have happened without developing a quality overall plan for education.

What Interviewees Would Change or Keep the Same in Future Bond Issues

All of the interviewees concluded they would not change anything from the way the bond issue was conducted. The superintendent summarized the sentiments by saying, "I would replicate to the greatest degree possible what we have done. I think it was well-done. It worked. It is a model that I promoted. I have shared it with five other districts, all of which passed their issues. So I think we have a positive model here." The board president indicated that many activities should be replicated, but the most important would be to, "Determine what the needs are, get the information out to the people, and give the people credit for having a brain. Let them make the right decision."

District D

District D covered approximately 180 square miles with a largely agricultural economic base. Multiple communities formed the district several years ago. The reasonable proximity of the district to a metropolitan community caused many district residents to commute to work, resulting a "bedroom community" status for much of the school district.

Need for New Facilities

Aging facilities brought about the need for the bond issue. Two multi-story district buildings were 80 years old or more, ADA issues existed, some elementary classes or class sections were being taught in hallways for portions of the day due to small classrooms, and several maintenance needs were being realized. The superintendent said the final decision to seek new facilities was

made following a study by an architectural firm which indicated remodeling and bringing the facilities into ADA compliance would cost the district \$3.2 million. The successful bond issue provided two new K-5 elementary buildings in different district towns, a new 6-8 middle school, and a 6 classroom addition onto the high school.

Community Economic Factors

The reliance on the agricultural economic base had negatively affected a previous bond issue election. As the school board president reported, "A lot of everything that happens here is according to what farm prices are and how the farmers are doing." At the time of the bond issue election, livestock prices were high, and milk prices were rising.

Many laborers resided in the district, but the wage range was \$8.00 to \$12.00 per hour, resulting in a lower middle class constituency. The superintendent said the district percentage of free and reduced meals was around 23%, which was below the state average. In general, the interviewees considered the bond issue to have received broad support from patrons at all economic levels.

Demographic Characteristics of the Community

School district leaders realized that with an economy based on agriculture concerns would exist about the burden the bond issue would place on farmers. They acknowledged the timing of the election was important, as it was held when prices for agricultural products were high or rising to a good

level. The fact that the district was spread out over such a large area with multiple communities forced district officials to work to meet the perceived needs in each area.

The district assessed valuation was good when compared with most athletic conference schools. The district patrons had not been paying any bonded indebtedness for almost 10 years, which provided school leaders with a positive selling point. With the passage of the bond issue, the tax rate climbed to over \$15.00 per thousand dollars of taxable valuation, but that rate ranked the district in the middle of conference schools, which was a favorable position for patrons to understand.

Enrollment

District enrollment was in an increasing pattern, which helped sell the bond issue. The committee chairperson opined that the new facilities would attract open enrollment students in the future, which would contribute to a positive enrollment picture. The fact that the enrollment had been increasing contributed to some of the problems in terms of classroom space for program offerings designed to meet student needs.

Size of the Bond Issue

The successful bond issue carried a higher price tag than the earlier failed one. According to the superintendent, the successful bond issue contained something for almost every constituency, with new elementary schools in two communities, a new middle school with restructured grade

levels, and additions to the high school to enhance the vocational agriculture program, the fine arts programs, and the athletic programs. Having the plan meet a wide variety of needs was determined through a survey conducted following the unsuccessful bond issue. As a result, the total size of the bond issue was not a factor because so many diverse needs were addressed.

Planning and Organization Associated with the Bond Issue Campaign

The committee chairperson served in that capacity for both bond issue campaigns. After the failed bond issue, questionnaires were sent out, and 34 pages of comments resulted from the input. School leaders and the committee chairperson reviewed the information to determine what the public would support in the bond election.

A philosophical change occurred at the start of the second bond issue. The campaign committee was expanded beyond community patrons, with significant involvement from the board president, a second board member, and the three district administrators. These people went to groups for presentations, met with people individually, distributed literature, and were generally active participants in the campaign.

Campaign Committee

The campaign committee called itself the Bond Issue Support Committee, or the BISC. The school board president cited the BISC as the main reason for the bond issue passage: "The major reason that it passed the second time was that with the people we had involved on our committee, the

support committee, they did an excellent job." The BISC was comprised of a wide variety of people, including representatives from each district community, farmers, business people from each community, two board members, and district administrators. As the board president stated, "We actually had people in every area that could go out with all the different meetings and stuff that were going on and talk the talk that people wanted to hear." In all, 44 people served on the BISC.

The Bond Issue Support Committee was made up of numerous subcommittees: the petition-visitation-voter categorization subcommittee, the finance subcommittee, the publicity subcommittee, the forum and speaker subcommittee, the absentee voting subcommittee, the calling subcommittee, and the arrangements and poll-watcher subcommittee. The superintendent characterized the BISC as a community-wide effort, with the superintendent in the background making sure it stayed organized and consistent with the overall bond issue strategy.

Leadership

Concerted efforts were made to provide leadership for the bond issue from the community, largely through the BISC. The BISC chairperson coordinated the overall efforts with support from the subcommittee chairpersons. Board members stepped to the forefront in support of the bond issue, and the superintendent kept everything moving, but stayed out of any publicly recognized leadership role to avoid the perception that the bond issue

was self-serving in some way.

Key Person

The BISC chairperson considered the superintendent as key to the bond issue campaign, keeping the committee and the board on track and communicating almost daily with those who needed to be kept abreast of events. The superintendent purposely maintained a low profile but was involved in every aspect of the bond issue campaign. This was done with specific goals in mind: "I was a coordinator, a facilitator, a behind-the-scenes organizer. Basically, my philosophical orientation was it would be passed by the people, and it needs to be a grassroots effort." During presentations the superintendent remained in the back of the room, but if questions surfaced which could not be answered by the presenter, they were deferred to the superintendent.

The school board president cited the BISC chairperson as the one who, "...got right out there and started explaining to people that it does not matter if his town is not getting anything out of this, because they are. Their kids are going to the other town for 6th grade on. He was the type of person that would convince people that you need to respect everybody." The unifying efforts of the BISC chairperson proved invaluable throughout the bond issue campaign and ultimately in the results of the election.

Role of the School Board

The superintendent characterized the board as "absolutely" united in

support of the bond issue from the planning stages through the election. As the school board president asserted, "We all knew what we had to have. We have, I think, a very good board. We have people that have kids that are in all kinds of things. We have a board that anything that goes on in the district, you'll find all of us there. Everybody was really, really together on this bond issue. We are very happy that it went through." Board members served on the BISC and attended meetings in pairs to avoid any problems with the open meetings law.

Role of School Staff

Concerted efforts were made by the BISC to keep staff members informed of the progress on the bond issue. The BISC chairperson contended, "If the teachers are not behind this, we are going to have a real tough time." Staff members were asked to serve on the BISC and were told that any questions could be directed to BISC members instead of the superintendent if they so desired. The open communication helped staff members realize that only a certain amount of funding was available, and that while staff input was highly regarded, priorities needed to be established to make the best use of the available funds. Several staff members chose not to be involved, as they did not reside in the district, and the board president had hoped for more support from staff members in general, regardless of where they lived.

Citizens

District and BISC leaders wanted broad-based community involvement and support. They worked to achieve this by having supporters at as many

places as possible, including having coffee meetings in people's homes.

Patrons let it be known that they wanted a positive bond issue campaign. For the failed bond issue, a videotape presentation had been developed to show questionable conditions with respect to classes in hallways, unsafe fire exits and ADA issues. People did not respond favorably to the tape, and it was not used during the successful bond issue campaign.

The movement of people from the major city to the rural area created a clientele that positively impacted the successful bond issue. The board president confirmed that these new district residents preferred the rural setting in which to educate their children, and by the time of the successful bond issue, these people had become involved in organizations within the district communities, thereby developing a better feeling about having ownership in the bond issue and educational matters in general. This block of voters turned into a supportive body for the bond issue.

On the BISC itself, the chairperson tried to make sure that the spouse of the BISC member was a supporter of the bond issue. The chairperson expounded on this unique philosophy: "It sounds like a strange concept, but you really had to know if that spouse was really behind whoever was supporting this. It took a real toll on a lot of us for six or eight weeks. The spouses really had to be behind us. There were several instances where I knew it [spousal support] was not, and so I just did not really push them too hard, because I did not want any conflict at home." The chairperson felt students needed a role in

the bond issue campaign, as they were directly affected by the outcome. Young people were involved as scouting groups that would take the posters around. The chairperson would have liked more input from students, but the time frame dictated much of the course of action taken by the BISC.

Power Structures within the District

The interviewees did not feel a power structure existed in the district, partially due to the agricultural nature of the district. There seemed to be pockets of influence, such as the farmers, but even they were not united on one side or the other of the bond issue. The board president attributed some of the bond issue success to persuading some of the farmers to support the issue by involving them on the BISC or in other ways after having opposed the earlier bond issue. The district did not have what would be considered a professional body of lawyers, dentists, or doctors, largely because of the proximity of the district to larger cities. The BISC chairperson said people with influence lived in the district, and when some of them came forward in support of the bond issue, they realized how influential they actually were, even though they were not in any kind of formally or informally organized power structure.

Supporters

Supporters of the bond issue campaign were pleased with the exposure and openness of the campaign. According to the board president, patrons felt comfortable asking questions, and presenters were trained that if they did not know an answer, they were to admit it and tell the individual that someone

would get back with an answer as soon as possible. Honesty with the public established credibility for the district leaders and campaign leaders and ultimately in the proposal presented on the ballot.

The superintendent called it a "train that people wanted to be on." The buildings were evidence in and of themselves as to the need for modern facilities. Another factor that supporters used during the campaign was that interest rates were low at the time of the election, which allowed more funds to be used for actual facilities instead of having to be used to pay bond interest.

Opponents

The main objection to the bond issue was the property tax increase that would result. District leaders explained that they would use other funding mechanisms if they were available, but at the time of the election, the only method to fund the bond issue was through property taxes. A farmer who was a leading opponent in the unsuccessful bond issue campaign tried to rally opposition against the successful bond issue but apparently failed, as many community patrons understood his personal interests were not necessarily in the best interests of education.

A second opposition group came from families who sent their children to a parochial school in one of the district communities. Due to financial difficulties within that school, the opposition was not as vehement as was anticipated. Many patrons realized that all students could be attending District D schools if the parochial school would close.

A final point of contention was that there should be one campus for all children with no attendance centers in the other district communities. District leaders and BISC leaders realized this was not a quality political consideration. The leader of the opposition stance was the same farmer who tried to rally opponents on the basis of property taxes increasing too much. Speculation was that the more this individual opposed the bond issue, the more some people changed to support the issue because of the extreme positions taken on every topic that surfaced by the individual and family members.

Informing the Public about the Bond Issue

The campaign theme reflected the ultimate request that was made of voters: "Vote Yes-Yes." In all of the campaign literature, patrons were informed of the need to vote "yes" for the bond issue and then to vote "yes" for the ability to assess the necessary tax rate to pay for the bond issue. Many people reported to the board president that the effort was helpful in better understanding what was going on during the successful bond campaign and election.

Basic factual information about the bond issue was distributed through brochures. The public relations specialist from the area education agency helped develop the brochure in off-duty time. Pictures were included, but they were in a positive vein, instead of the negative manner of the videotape in the earlier unsuccessful bond issue. The brochures were distributed at all meetings where presentations were made, and they were placed in public places such as

banks and the post offices so people would have ready access to the information.

Personal contacts became important during the campaign, as presenters and board members at meetings where presentations were given had been told to notice if anyone seemed to be confused or unsure about what was being discussed. BISC members then made an effort to talk to these people and offered to visit them personally or with some neighbors to explain the issues in their homes. This led to publishing an offer from the BISC that if patrons wanted somebody to visit in their homes with just a family, perhaps a neighbor and the family in a small group setting, presenters were willing to do it.

In addition to disseminating factual information about the bond issue, the BISC published a list of voters who agreed to publicly support the bond issue. The list grew during the course of the campaign and served as a source of commitment for those people to maintain support through the election. Buttons were provided to supporters to help spread the word about the bond issue, and near the end of the campaign, signs were put up in the yards of supporters.

Focus

According to the BISC chairperson, the focus of information was on the basic facts. As the chairperson maintained, "The focus was basic facts. Do not try to exploit that this is the greatest thing in the world. We laid out the facts. Truly what was needed. Truly what it was going to cost you. We had to have the support of the facts, so that when we laid it out, the opponents could never

argue, 'No, no, that is not true. That is not the way it really is.' Strictly facts the second time, and we continued to dwell on that the whole time. Anything we brought up was not, 'This is the neatest thing the school district needs. This is what our children need.' That was not what we brought up. Strictly facts, state it like it is."

The superintendent felt efforts were made to humanize and personalize the bond issue. Pictures were taken of children and placed on storyboard for the public to view at presentations. The pictures focused on the children, but people also could see children being taught in the hallways, walls in need of repair, and other points of concern. Opportunities for tours through the buildings were arranged whenever there was a public gathering at the school, and their personal observations of the conditions helped convince many patrons to support the bond issue.

Technology became another focus of information. The aging buildings were not constructed to accommodate modern technology. Limited space meant limited access to technology in some programs, such as the FFA program at the high school. Students were on schedules before and after school to access the FFA computers to complete reports for their contests. The successful bond issue addressed this need, which helped gather support from many district farmers.

Specific Strategies That Were Helpful

The school board president felt the most successful strategy was

expanding the BISC to increase involvement of district patrons. The support of the BISC members resulted in support from their constituents. Though the process was quite time-consuming, the board president felt the bond issue would not have succeeded without their involvement and commitment.

The BISC chairperson considered the best strategy to be the focus on the facts. This did not provide opponents with an opportunity to challenge information as inaccurate. The factual information served as the basis for the presentations to groups and helped to assure that the same message was given to all groups.

The superintendent considered the list of public supporters as one of the most positive factors during the bond issue campaign. As the election date neared, more patrons would call and request that their names would be added to the list of supporters. As the superintendent concluded, "There was tremendous peer pressure among the adults in the community. That was extremely effective."

The other extremely effective activity was contacting district graduates. Contacts were made to graduates attending colleges and universities by high school students and other young people residing in the community, urging them to vote by absentee ballot. The strategy was very successful, with a total of 185 absentee ballots cast and 141 of them in favor of the bond issue. Since the total number of "yes" votes was 1,092, the positive absentee ballots represented 13% of the total positive votes, a significant portion of those votes.

Unexpected Events

The board president felt the most surprising occurrence was the change by some people who had opposed the first bond issue to supporters of the successful bond issue. This seemed to have been accomplished by concerted efforts to disseminate information in more ways and more thoroughly than had been done previously.

A second unexpected event was a challenge on the day of the election that the BISC had violated campaign ethics laws. Apparently the challenge was made by one person or a small group. The challenge did not change the election results.

Laws Affecting School Bond Issue Campaigns and Elections

The board president considered the laws pertaining to ADA issues and fire codes as having the most significant impact on the bond issue. The board was forced to take some action, and rather than spend \$3.2 million to remodel old facilities, the board decided to pursue new facilities.

The BISC chairperson recognized the need for someone to be constantly on top of laws to make sure there is compliance by everyone. Contacts with attorneys, architects, Department of Education consultants, and other knowledgeable people needed to be made regularly whenever questions arose. In District D, the superintendent assumed this role, and even though all of the appropriate contacts had been made, the challenge on the campaign ethics laws violation still occurred. As a result, the superintendent advised,

"Call the Campaign Ethics and Disclosure Office directly," document who was contacted, and request any opinions be conveyed in writing.

Recommendations Regarding Laws

The interviewees were united on changes they would recommend to officials:

1. The first change they recommended was to change the 60% supermajority to a simple majority for passage of a bond issue. The board president cited a unique reason for changing the law: "I travel around a lot. I see so many towns that have lost their schools, and a lot of it is they cannot get their bond issues passed, and they have to end up closing, and they have to join with neighboring schools. People take a lot of pride in their schools." The BISC chairperson supported changing the law because bond issues were to be in the best educational interests of children and not about the desires of adults. The superintendent contended a change only made sense: "Everybody else is elected by simple majority, and if I were to vote 'yes,' and my vote is worth only 2/3 of somebody voting 'no.' That does not make a whole lot of sense."
2. On the law requiring a second ballot question to exceed the \$2.70 tax levy rate, the BISC chairperson thought changing to a simple majority vote would take care of the major concerns centered around having two ballot questions. The superintendent favored

deleting the \$2.70 figure, but supported retention of the \$4.05 maximum for bond issues.

3. The superintendent felt some of the campaign ethics laws needed revision, especially dealing with the manner in which information can be disseminated. There were no concerns about affording the opportunities for bond issue opponents to get their message out, but when there was no organized opposition, inviting them to distribute information was difficult to accomplish.

Other Recommendations

The interviewees were very satisfied with the activities conducted during the bond issue campaign. The BISC chairperson recommended more involvement by kids, finding out what their ideas were and informing them of what was happening. The superintendent encouraged holding the meetings with smaller groups, having found them to be more productive and better attended than the public meetings held at the school buildings.

What Interviewees Would Change or Keep the Same in Future Bond Issues

The success of the bond issue convinced the interviewees that much had been done well. As the superintendent commented, "I am not sure there is a lot I would do differently. It is not rocket science. It is a lot of hard work and a lot of hours, and a lot of work and long hours by community leaders, and identifying the right people who will serve in quasi-leadership positions, people that will follow through, people that will do the work." The BISC chairperson wanted to

involve the students in more ways and in better qualities ways. The board president wanted to work on making sure that staff members were behind the bond issue, regardless of where they resided. The superintendent perhaps summed up the bottom line for bond issues by saying, "Bond issues, they are local, they are politically local, but the overall strategy has been used in a lot of places. You just tailor some broad strategy that everybody can agree on."

Similarities Across Districts

Need for New Facilities

Aging buildings were identified as the major reason for the bond issues in all four districts. A corollary to this reason was the fact that the aging facilities did not allow the educational program to be presented in a manner conducive to meeting student needs. The aging buildings were constructed on the industrial model, with rectangular-shaped rooms designed to facilitate lecture as the major type of instructional activity. Teachers simply were not able to meet the needs of students in the old facilities.

Community Economic Factors

The aging facilities were perhaps contributing components to the perception that socioeconomic factors did not enter into the overall support for the bond issue in each district. Voters apparently understood the urgency for new facilities to better meet the educational needs of the students. All four districts were basically rural, so farmers were impacted in terms of property taxes. As one interviewee who was a farmer indicated, "There are not too many

of us any more, so there are not as many farmers to oppose a bond issue as there used to be."

Demographic Characteristics of the Community

In each district, the impact on large property tax payers, who usually were farmers, was a consideration that campaign committee leaders and school leaders had to address. Larger farms meant that individual property owners were going to pay significant amount toward the overall cost of the new facilities. The districts with assessed valuations in the average to high range had a broader base over which to spread the tax increase. The district with a low assessed valuation and a correspondingly high tax rate had to increase the burden on taxpayers who already were paying a premium cost for education in the district. Even though property owners in this district wanted to fund the bond issue with other sources of revenue, the committee chairperson said they kept explaining to the voters that the only method allowed in law to fund a bond issue was through property taxes.

Enrollment

Stable or increasing enrollments tended to give a boost to the bond issue, as voters were optimistic that the school district would be in existence for years into the future. While declining enrollments did not affect the election outcomes in two districts, district leaders also were optimistic that the new facilities would help attract new students, either through families moving into the district or through open enrollment. All districts were not in peril of being

absorbed in another round of statewide reorganizations, but two districts were of the size that declining enrollments of 20 or more students on the average for a ten year period could force them to consider sharing of programs or students with neighboring districts in order to continue offering quality educational programs.

Size of the Bond Issue

The voters in each district made a significant commitment to education by approving bond issues that were at or near the maximum 5% of assessed valuation that was permitted in law. According to the interviewees in each district, the size of the bond issue was not a factor in the election. The plan that was presented to the voters was the key in each district, as voters had previously rejected bond issues in each district. Apparently, based on feedback from community patrons in several forms, the "right" plan was finally presented to the voters, and approval was given without regard for the size of the bond issue.

Planning and Organization Associated with the Bond Issue Campaign

Experience was a good teacher in each district. School board members, the superintendents, and the committee chairpersons unanimously agreed that they had learned from the failed bond issues. Listening to the voters through focus groups, surveys, or some other means, provided information to help develop a plan that voters indicated they would support, as well as how the voters wanted to have the information presented to them. Taking the initiative

and time to "read the community" paid off in each district.

Campaign Committee

High levels of community involvement were evident in each district. Such a philosophy did not develop in a short period of time. Cultivating community included getting patrons into the school facilities for reasons other than the bond issue. Parent-teacher conferences, music programs, athletic contests, school plays, visitation days for parents and grandparents, and many other activities had occurred over the years to create a sense that the public was welcome in the schools. When the time came for community involvement through the campaign committee, school leaders knew who could be leaders in the campaign and who could help fill other necessary roles throughout the bond issue campaign. In each district, the campaign committee and the level of community involvement were thought to be crucial to the passage of the bond issue.

Leadership

Leadership was multifaceted in each school district. Each board president considered a unified board in support of the bond issue as a way of demonstrating leadership to district patrons. The common role of all boards in this study involved making sure that legal matters associated with the bond issue were properly met and acted upon by the board according to the Code of Iowa.

The superintendent in each district served as the organizer, facilitator,

and communicator between the board and the campaign committee. Contacts on legal issues were the responsibility of the superintendent, who had to be aware of the campaign ethics laws and their impact on the activities of the superintendent. Strong leadership from the superintendent was manifested in each district.

The committee chairpersons deserved considerable credit not only for heading the campaign committee, but for readily assuming the role as requested by the school board and/or the superintendent. In two districts this was a significant change from prior elections, with one campaign committee moving to the forefront of the campaign, while another stepped back to allow the school board and superintendent to assume the visible leadership roles during the campaign.

Key Person

All of the interviewees were gracious and willing to spread credit for the success of the bond issue to other people who were involved in the bond issue. However, in listening carefully to what each person said, the superintendent was the person who played the key role in each bond issue. The superintendent worked with the school board to help the members recognize the needs that existed and to help develop the plan that would be presented to voters. The superintendent was responsible for working with the campaign committee and aiding them in developing the various sources of information designed to help present the plan and the data to the voters. Attendance at

meetings became part of the regular routine throughout the bond issue process, whether they were early morning meetings with the campaign committee or in the evening with the school board or community groups. Each superintendent agreed that the total process was consuming in terms of time and energy. Without the strong leadership supplied by the superintendent in each district, the bond issues may not have achieved the success they did.

Role of the School Board

The school boards assumed their legal responsibilities in terms of planning, receiving petitions for election, and calling for the election. All of the school boards were considered to be united in support of the bond issue. This was not to say that disagreements did not occur on specific topics such as roof style or space for certain classes, but as one superintendent stated, "I would not let them leave the room until everyone agreed to support the same position." A unified school board to the public was regarded as a "must" by all interviewees.

Role of School Staff

Staff involvement in the bond issues was generally considered as positive in the successful bond issue process. Efforts were made to include staff members in planning for the new facilities, and progress reports were given to staff members regularly. Staff members were not key players in public meetings or in other visible activities, so as to avoid the perception of wanting the bond issue to pass for self-serving reasons. In general, the support of staff members for the bond issue was solicited, and they were encouraged to extend this

support outside of the school into the people within their sphere of influence.

Citizens

Leaders in each district wanted to create the understanding that the bond issue was the result of a grassroots effort from district patrons. Citizens were involved in the campaign committees and the associated activities of the committees, attended meetings to present ideas or questions, and assumed their right to determine how public funds would be spent by voting in the bond issue election. The high level of involvement by district patrons undoubtedly contributed to the success of the bond issues.

Power Structures within the District

Knowing whether or not a power structure existed in the districts was significant. Where none existed, school leaders and campaign committee members focused on information applicable to the district as a whole and how the bond issue impacted on meeting the needs of everyone in the district. In the district where a power structure was identified, that group spearheaded the bond issue as the campaign committee. They had assumed this role in other non-school elections and had sufficient influence to achieve the results in the other elections that they had desired as a group. Proper utilization of a known power structure achieved positive results for the school and for the community.

Supporters

Bond issue supporters played leading roles in each district. The public endorsement for the bond issue by prominent supporters applied considerable

peer pressure. As the bond issue campaigns proceeded and more voters stepped forward to lend their public support to the bond issue, the effort became what one committee chairperson described as a "...train that everyone wanted to board."

Opponents

All of the districts were fortunate that in the successful bond issue, no formal, organized opposition existed. Learning from previous experiences, information that was disseminated contained facts and reasons for proposing the new facilities. This prevented those who were opposed to the bond issue from discrediting the information as biased or untrue. The campaign committees made concerted efforts to address questions or concerns that arose during the bond issue campaign, and one board president thought the approach helped change the minds of some voters who had opposed earlier bond issues. This was an exception, as the consensus of the remaining interviewees was that little, if anything, could be done to change the minds of voters who opposed a bond issue, and that time was wasted in trying to get them to change.

Informing the Public about the Bond Issue

Several commonalities existed among the districts in how information was made available and accessible to voters. Brochures of some kind were developed, indicating factual information about valuations, tax rates, variations in the proposed tax increase due to the kinds of property involved, comparisons

of tax rates with neighboring districts or conference districts, and reasons that the plan was being taken to voters for their consideration. The local newspapers or the newspaper serving the district provided a source which was used to further explain what the bond issue was about. Public meetings were conducted, although the formal ones held at the schools were not well attended. More success in spreading the word about the bond issue came from small group meetings or meetings of community organizations, such as the Lions or Rotary. One major factor that each district faced was educating the voters to support both ballot questions, as the second ballot question was necessary due to the fact that the bond issue exceeded the tax rate of \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. With all of the methods described above, the most successful communication method in all districts was personal contact with voters, whether it was one-on-one, at small gatherings in homes, at coffee shops, or in informal conversation.

Focus

Students and how the new facilities would provide better educational opportunities for them were the centerpieces of campaign information. Enhanced technological capabilities certainly were highlighted, but in a manner that brought technology back to improving the education of the students.

Specific Strategies That Were Helpful

Many visible strategies were employed among the districts, including yard signs, newspaper articles, newspaper ads, special flyers, and buttons, to

name a few. The most successful strategy was an overall philosophy of communicating with the public in as many ways as possible to help them better understand what the bond issue was about. Communication occurred in a give-and-take fashion, in that listening to what voters said helped shape the plans for the bond issue and helped campaign committee members identify methods of presenting information to the public about the bond issue.

Unexpected Events

The bond issue campaigns were so well planned that very few unexpected events occurred. Nothing happened in common among all of the districts during the successful elections which was unanticipated. Interviewees indicated that in previous elections, they had been somewhat surprised by letters to the editor or some tactics from opponents that were not strictly accurate, but in the successful bond issues, even some of these tactics had been anticipated and methods of dealing with them were in place.

Laws Affecting School Bond Issue Campaigns and Elections

Three laws or sets of laws impacted all of the districts. The fact that property taxes provided the only funding for the bond issue was brought up among all of the districts. As expected, farmers were most concerned over this fact, as the brunt of the tax burden would fall on them.

Interviewees stated that everyone was cognizant of the need to comply with campaign ethics laws and all of the accompanying requirements. The perception of how to interpret the campaign ethics laws in each district shaped

the role taken by school board members probably more so than other group in the district, making some board members feel much more comfortable in the background rather than risk a violation or the perception of a violation by serving in a more visible or vocal capacity.

The final law which impacted each district was the requirement for two ballot questions, which was necessitated by needing a tax rate in excess of \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation to meet the bond issue plans. Campaign committee members made extensive efforts to educate voters on the need to vote on both ballot questions. To pass the bond issue at the level proposed in the plan required the 60% supermajority vote on each question.

Recommendations Regarding Laws

The change in law supported by all interviewees was to eliminate the requirement for two ballot questions when the proposed plan necessitated a tax rate of more than \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation to meet the needs of the plan. While there was consensus that educating the public was not totally bad, there was agreement that having two questions confused voters. In each district, the percentage of votes in favor of exceeding the \$2.70 tax rate was slightly less than the percentage of votes in favor of the bond issue.

The other law which garnered support for consideration was the method of financing bond issues. The interviewees recognized the burden placed on farmers as a result of paying for the bond issue with property taxes. Including income surtax in the funding mix was mentioned as the most likely option,

although the local option sales tax was a potential funding source in some districts.

Other Recommendations

Concluding recommendations encompassed much of what had been presented earlier. Interviewees were adamant about the need for strong leadership, with a unified board in support of the bond issue, a superintendent who kept all activities progressing according to plans, and a campaign committee that supported and promoted the bond issue throughout the district. Community involvement surfaced as another major topic, with the interviewees advising to have a nucleus of supporters on the campaign committee who then branched out to others for support of the bond issue. The final common recommendation was to learn about what other school districts did to achieve a successful bond issue election, and to adapt techniques and strategies to what would work in the local district.

What Interviewees Would Change or Keep the Same in Future Bond Issues

One interviewee summed up the feelings of all of the participants in this study: "I would replicate to the greatest degree possible what we did in this bond issue." Leaders in the districts had learned from failed bond issues, and those were the changes that were made over time which ultimately resulted in the successful bond issue. If providing some of this information in one document helped other school districts learn about ideas and strategies that worked in successful bond issues, the study achieved what it was designed to

accomplish.

Department of Education Consultant

Consultants from the Iowa Department of Education provided assistance to school boards, school district leaders, and citizens in the forms of information about laws, facility studies to help determine needs, and clarification in terms of what limitations existed with respect to bond issues. By the nature of the position, Department of Education consultants were not involved in questions which needed to be resolved at the local level. The possibility existed that an appeal of a bond issue could have been brought to the state level, and no one at the state level wanted to be in a situation of having taken a position on the issue without having all information from all parties involved in the appeal.

Need for New Facilities

"We just have a tremendous infrastructure need, that bond issues are part of the way of addressing it," according to the consultant, who cited two different types of bond issues that were being proposed. One type of bond issue involved the growth districts in Iowa, which was comprised primarily of urban and suburban districts. The other type of bond issue dealt with replacement reasons, fire and safety reasons, modernization, an old building not wired for technology, and meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Local school and community leaders decided that replacement was fiscally more responsible than continuing to put money into an aging facility which was not built to comply with modern fire and safety standards, nor was it

designed to meet the educational needs of students in a technological society.

Community Economic Factors

The consultant felt that certain parts of Iowa were not involved in a significant number of bond issues, stating, "You are probably not even seeing some of the poorest districts in the state attempting bond issues, because they have so many other needs. It is more just maintaining what they have."

Referring to the two types of bond issues prevalent in the state, two community economic bases were identified. In the growth districts there was a high concentration of homes with a very limited agriculture base. The needs in these districts were easily identified, in that space was inadequate to house the number of students enrolled in the system. In rural areas, when talking primarily about replacement, the discussion went toward how the bond issue would be paid, and who would pay for it. Over the course of this bond, taxpayers questioned how much the bond issue would cost in terms of property taxes per acre, what was being paid for rent, or what the purchase price of land was. These factors determined what the total additional cost was for property taxpayers.

Demographic Characteristics of the Community

For the 1998-99 school year, total school district tax rates varied by over \$12.00 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation, with a state high of \$20.83, a state median of \$13.06, and a state low of \$8.09. Unfortunately, tax rates in and of themselves provided no information about the valuation of the property. Thus,

with respect to school bond issues, the consultant maintained that local communication remained vital to the overall process, "You still have that local discussion. You may have a property rich district, and if the property richness comes from agriculture, you still have the concern over what it is going to do to the taxes on that ag land." The consultant suggested part of the local discussion should include consideration of the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy, which could include income surtax in the mix to fund the levy.

Another demographic factor the consultant considered as important was the percentage of families in the district with children in school or children who will be entering school versus the percentage of families without children in school. The former was decreasing across the state, while the latter correspondingly increased and was likely to continue to increase as children of "baby boomers" completed their secondary education. Another factor which the consultant speculated as contributing to the increasing number of families without children in school was the fact that many communities were becoming bedroom communities, with people driving the distance to work to avoid living in larger cities which did not have the lifestyle people desired.

Other demographic factors identified by the consultant included: the composition of the valuation, how much of it was agricultural, how much of it was residential, and how much of it was business; the income levels of residents; and the willingness of the community to support education. The consultant considered the last factor as somewhat of a tradition in a district

which varied from community to community. The consultant saw support for education as a, "...social, cultural type of a thing. It is how a community ties to the school district: concerts, musicals, athletics, and all that type of things. The community has some pride in the school district."

Enrollment

According to the consultant, defensive building occurred at one point in time, with leaders of school districts thinking they were going to reorganize so they needed to build the high school to become the center of the new district. "We are sort of ending a reorganization era," said the consultant, "and we are probably not going to be starting a reorganization era for another five years." The consultant maintained that some discussion of this nature was occurring due to the enrollment decline pattern in many areas of the state, and board and administrators were looking ahead, realizing they soon were going to be on a level that they would not sustain a K-12 district.

Size of the Bond Issue

The size of the bond issue was not a matter brought to the Department of Education, as the consultant stated that was a local determination, "The size of it, whether it is a Taj Mahal or a Morton building, that is going to be a local decision." Consultants at the Department of Education reviewed plans, as they were required to do.

Planning and Organization Associated with the Bond Issue Campaign

Consultants did not receive comments or questions regarding planning

for a bond issue. The consultant mentioned that suggestions related to bond issues were available at the Department of Education web site, but the suggestions did not provide a formula for a bond issue campaign.

Campaign Committee

The web site information contained ideas for composition of the bond issue campaign committee. The consultant emphasized that community involvement was critical to bond issues. The distinction between districts that were in a growth cycle and those in a replacement mode impacted in general on the composition of the campaign committee, as the focus was considerably different, based on the needs of the district.

Leadership

The consultant felt leadership developed because of the board's and the administration's relationship with the business district or with certain leaders in the community. The role of the school board varied among districts, as the consultant proposed, "In the larger community, maybe they are more political. The ties to the business community are probably different in the larger district than in the smaller district. Some of your leadership is going to come from the business community, the chamber of commerce, that side of it in the larger community. The smaller one is a different network of who the influential people are." The consultant thought most of the questions received at the Department of Education came from smaller districts because they were not involved in bond issues and other kinds of financial elections as frequently as larger

districts were.

Key Person

"My thought is that it typically going to be the superintendent who is going to be held accountable and is the person who is going to make sure it happens," suggested the consultant. While this factor probably varied from district to district, the consultant believed that expectation existed, "...from day one of planning until the final brick is laid and everything is in place. That is going to be true, all the way through suburban school districts."

Role of the School Board

Contacts from school board members usually focused on a specific step in the bond issue process or on a law, according to the consultant. Often, the questions centered on what was specifically contained in applicable laws. As for board members who were seeking assistance in promoting a bond issue, the consultant said they refer board members to other educational organizations, such as the Iowa Association of School Boards.

Role of School Staff

In larger communities, the consultant said more staff was available to work with a bond issue, and therefore very few questions came from those districts. Regardless of the size of the district, the consultant advised that staff members in general get involved in the process and attend board meetings where the information is discussed. With respect to questions about how staff members could support or oppose a bond issue, the consultant indicated these

inquiries were turned over to the legal staff and to the Campaign Ethics Office.

Citizens

When questions were received from citizens, the consultant urged, "As a citizen, you have the right to ask questions, and you should be asking questions. You should be present at board meetings to hear the discussions and never hesitate asking questions. As a citizen, that is your right." The consultant encouraged involvement from a broad range of community patrons. Communication on an ongoing basis and communication designed to make certain that patrons understood the specifics of the bond issue were cited as important when working with citizens.

Power Structures within the District

The consultant acknowledged that Department of Education personnel were too far removed from the process to have a thorough understanding of power structures in districts. However, recognition of the influential people in the district was important to the outcome of the bond issue. Districts with large student populations and those with dramatically growing populations had a different clientele with which to work, as business, industry, and chambers of commerce tended to be more influential than in districts that were more rural in nature, where farmers and workers associated with agriculture-related businesses tended to have significant influence.

Supporters

Garnering support for a bond issue was largely a function of

communication. Once again, districts which were growing in size sought support to provide facilities to deal with the increasing number of students. Leaders of districts which were replacing facilities had to explain to voters the need for the new facilities and the reasons that remodeling of the existing facilities was not a proper choice.

Opponents

Local patrons who were upset over a bond issue or who were challenging a bond issue tended to be upset over a single issue which, according to the consultant, often had nothing to do with the actual bond issue. As the consultant reiterated, "We tell them the first step has to be with your local school district so you are communicating your views. We cannot do that for you, and we should not be doing that for you. Bringing it up to the State is not the appropriate place." Consultants became involved only through the formal appeal process, most of which related to the closing of a building. In those situations, the consultant said their goal was to make certain that the proper procedures were followed by the local board. In appeals, the final decision on whether or not to overturn the decision of a local board is made by the State Board of Education.

Informing the Public about the Bond Issue

Regardless of the size of the district, voters needed to know the reasons for the bond issue and what the costs were going to be. The cost of the bond issue included an explanation of what the bond issue would mean in terms of

taxes, whether it be on a home, business property, agricultural property, or other kinds of property. A question that was surfacing with increased frequency dealt with the disposition of the old building in cases where a building was being replaced. As the consultant stated, "You can clearly give or sell it to a community. The other thing that we have probably seen more in recent years is that no one wants the building, and so you have to look at the demolition." With either scenario came a large concern over the proper manner with which to handle the asbestos that likely was present in the old structure. As the consultant stated, "It has been a more expensive proposition recently to demolish or give away a building because asbestos abatement or removal has to be part of that."

Focus

Information provided to the public needed to include clearly identified needs, the reasons for proposing the bond issue, and costs associated with the project. Whether the district was growing and in need of additional space or the district had aging buildings that were deteriorating, voters needed information which delineated the needs at the current time and in the projected future.

Specific Strategies That Were Helpful

"I tend to think it is a communications issue, getting it communicated to the community and getting the community out to vote," stressed the consultant. If opposition to the bond issue was present, the consultant thought it was even more important to get voters out who supported the bond issue because, "The

strong opposition tends to get out and vote."

Unexpected Events

The consultant did not identify anything that was unexpected in a bond issue election because Department of Education personnel were not involved closely enough at the local level to thoroughly understand what occurred throughout the bond issue process.

Laws Affecting School Bond Issue Campaigns and Elections

All laws which related to campaign ethics and taxation rates affected school bond issue campaigns and elections. Campaign ethics matters were referred to the Department of Education legal services or to the Campaign Ethics Office. One of the taxations rate laws that had a large impact on how a bond issue campaign was conducted was the requirement for a second ballot question if the proposed tax levy for the bond issue exceeded \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. According to the consultant, that law had been in place since the 1960s and probably emanated from the time when tax rates were expressed in terms of "mills." As to how the rate was derived, the consultant speculated that since the basic property tax foundation rate that applied to each school district for the operation of the school was \$5.40 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation and this rate formerly was expressed as "20 mills," the \$2.70 figure was considered to be a logical point, since it was half of the basic foundation property tax rate, or "10 mills" at the time the law was written.

In the 1998 Iowa General Assembly, legislators passed a law which

allowed school districts in a county to seek to levy for a one-cent local option sales tax, with the proceeds to be used for infrastructure needs among the school districts in the county. The impact of the law had not been completely realized, as the consultant hypothesized, "My general prediction has been that you are going to see the local option sales tax passed in every urban area, and to a certain extent it would be passed along the Interstate 80/Interstate 35 corridor, where you have businesses that generate sales tax. Pretty soon you have a situation where you have the 'haves' and the 'have nots,' and therefore you have an equity issue drawn just from that on the infrastructure." The consultant further contended, "If they get newer facilities, their facilities are more adequate than the ones that do not have it, and you take a district in an area of the state that is very poor financially, low values on land, limited industry, and high concentrations of poverty, those are the districts that I think have the greatest challenge. They then could challenge the richest district. We have set up an equity issue in the finance formula." State leaders in Iowa proudly pointed to the fact that Iowa had not been challenged in terms of equity in providing financial support to school districts. The local option sales tax was designed to provide funding to deal with infrastructure needs, and the consultant acknowledged there was agreement over these needs across the state. The major concern brought out by the local option sales tax was developing a manner to equitably pay to meet the infrastructure needs across the state.

Recommendations Regarding Laws

The consultant predicted that conversation on the role of income surtax in paying for infrastructure needs would proceed slowly, but that the discussion would continue. The consultant advocated the continuing discussion, stating, "At one point, when we were using property as the basis for measuring wealth and for supporting the school, we had the majority of the people living on farms, and we did not have the business and industry we have today. Today we have a different type of economy, and maybe we need to be looking at a different type of support for infrastructure that matches the economy that we have." Issues associated with the discussion on income surtax included:

1. If income surtax became part of the mix to pay for bond issues, should passage require a simple majority instead of the supermajority?
2. Realizing that income surtax was considered as an unstable revenue source, what would the impact be on bond ratings and bond interest rates?
3. If income surtax was used to pay for bond issues, would the limit on the percentage of income surtax be increased from the 20% allowed in law?

Another issue presented by the consultant was to more clearly define the role of the state in meeting the infrastructure needs of local school districts.

Some states were involved in the process as funding a percentage of the bond

issue or helping to buy-down interest rates. The consultant stated many of the states involved in the process found that the commitment grew to such a level that a large portion of the state budget went toward school district infrastructure needs, thereby restricting what was done to meet other needs.

Other Recommendations

From a practical perspective, the consultant emphasized that a well-documented need had to be identified and that the board supported addressing the need. The official action taken by the board had to match the need, and the consultant advised, "Probably there is that mix that you want new construction to be innovative enough to meet the technological needs for years to come, but not so overwhelming that you run the risk of failure." Throughout the bond issue campaign, district leaders and campaign committee members had to develop an understanding of the level of support from the community, and the best way to accomplish this task was to have a high level of community involvement throughout the entire bond issue process.

Iowa Association of School Boards Consultant

A major role assumed by the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) was training for superintendents and school board members. Through the Iowa School Finance and Leadership Consortium, superintendents and those who planned to be superintendents were trained about the different tax levies available to school districts, what the uses of those particular levies were, and what the processes were, as far as publishing notice, and the maximum that

could be levied for any particular purpose. A similar but more general program of training known as the Academy of Board Learning Experiences was available for potential board members and new board members. Training was available for district personnel in how to invest funds when the bonds were sold so they could determine how to best invest their money for the greatest return, along with all of the processes associated with bond money investment. IASB consultants advised districts on good practices associated with bond issues and kept track of data about bond issues, such as the passage rate, the failure rate, details about the voting, and how much money was involved in the bond issue.

Need for New Facilities

The main reason given to IASB consultants for bond issues was the age of existing facilities. In some districts, increasing enrollment was a factor, but most of the contacts to IASB were from schools involved in the repair or replacement of a facility. A third less popular reason at the time of this study was reorganization, in that new district boundaries resulted in the need to have one or more facilities more centrally located in the new district.

Community Economic Factors

According to the consultant, a perception existed that socioeconomic status would be a major issue in a district bond issue. IASB consultants had been asked for ideas on how to address socioeconomic status. The consultant did not think socioeconomic status was a major factor, as families from all socioeconomic levels had children go through schools.

Demographic Characteristics of the Community

With regard to the assessed valuation of the district, the consultant felt that, "Valuation is more of a factor of comparability after the fact to be able to justify to the teacher's union and other folks where you stand and that you made a good effort." The consultant stated that for almost every levy, there were highs and lows for both valuations and tax rates, and that strategies were able to be developed to overcome those concerns. The consultant did not think that a high tax rate implied that a district would have difficulty in passing bond issues.

Enrollment

The large urban districts appeared to be having more difficulty than others in meeting facility needs due to increasing enrollments, according to the consultant. The consultant also speculated that school districts with an enrollment under 250 would have concerns, with patrons questioning whether or not to invest in facilities for the future when the district could be forced to reorganize or because the population base was so small the cost could not be spread out over a broad population.

Size of the Bond Issue

The consultant indicated that IASB personnel had not received any comments about the size of the bond issue as a concern during a campaign.

Planning and Organization Associated with the Bond Issue Campaign

The consultant emphasized that any successful venture was likely to require considerable planning and organization and that "Some of that

planning involves understanding who is going to be opposed, understanding your opposition, and being able to defuse those objections in a very simple way. The more complicated you get, the harder it is to make your case."

Campaign Committee

Broad representation from the citizenship was more apt to appeal to a wide base of citizens. The consultant acknowledged that if the committee was entirely composed school employees, it would be difficult to overcome the bias that the bond issue was being conducted only to meet the needs of the bureaucrats.

The consultant did not consider it to be a positive influence on the committee to have known opponents on it, "...because the enthusiasm of the group is critical, because there is a lot of work and a lot of long hours, and...any question that the process is maybe being sabotaged, I think that would be very difficult for your committee to feel good about what they were doing." The consultant also advised against having people on the committee who were married to known opponents or who knew them well enough that it would be difficult for them to be happy at home or in their work environment. "Keep it full of folks who are really positive advocates."

Leadership

Leadership varied according to the composition of the district in the opinion of the consultant. Business representatives, especially in cities, were vital to have leading in the process. In rural areas, the consultant thought

having a Farm Bureau member would make a big difference.

Key Person

The consultant believed that the person who had the perception of authority in the district was the key person. That person could have been a parent or someone who had lived in the district for several years. Other likely possibilities included someone who was knowledgeable about taxes, schools, and legal issues, or someone who was always willing to devote time to a worthy cause.

Role of the School Board

School boards had to be cautioned about crossing the campaign ethics lines. The consultant indicated that board members were able to publicly favor the bond issue, but that they had to guard against spending public money in doing so. Caution was urged in the level of participation for board members. On the other hand, the consultant thought board members would be good presenters at public meetings or events, because this was a way to evidence their support as the people who best understood the needs of the district.

A united board was considered as critical because "...your school board is usually a fairly representative sample of your citizenry....They tend to have the best interests of the kids at heart, as a general rule, and if you cannot convince those folks to be your advocates, then you are going to have a problem." If the board was split over the bond issue, the consultant did not think that would automatically doom a bond issue. The consultant indicated a split board likely

meant there was a split in votes on the board, but not an equal split in power among the members.

Role of School Staff

The superintendent and other school employees came under the auspices of the campaign ethics laws and had to make sure to say, "I am speaking as a citizen, and not as a representative of the district," when supporting the bond issue. At all other times, school staff members were providers of information, such as the cost of the proposed building, the condition of the existing facility, and the cost of the bond to the property taxpayer. As soon as they started making some judgments and conclusions, caution was needed.

Citizens

Involvement of a large number of people who supported the bond issue was important to achieving a positive election outcome. The consultant was skeptical about the passage of a bond issue without considerable support stating, "I think the citizens have a real stake in developing a community and their school district. It would surprise me that a bond issue would pass if you did not have citizens involved." The more understanding of what people wanted for the educational opportunities in the district, the greater the likelihood of success of the bond issue election.

Power Structures within the District

While acknowledging that power structures could be present in school districts, IASB personnel did not have a body of information from local district

school boards about the degree to which they existed.

Supporters

Supporters of a bond issue tended to be under more scrutiny than opponents, and thus compliance with campaign ethics laws was important throughout the bond issue campaign. As the consultant reiterated, "I think there is a concern that proponents have to be completely and totally up front, honest, telling the truth about everything they do, or they are called to task."

Opponents

Local school district board members and superintendents tended to express frustration about how to appropriately deal with opponents. Opponents were not held to the same level of accountability that supporters were held, as the consultant characterized them by saying, "Folks who oppose it are less concerned about representing the whole truth, and pick out little bits and pieces of what their truth is, and it is very easy to publish that and get away with it."

Several groups were cited as possible opponents to bond issues in general. First, the consultant said there was a "...whole group of people that are against paying taxes, period." A second group included "...folks who are really concerned about using taxpayers' money unwisely, who think that the cause or the need has to be demonstrated in a sufficient way to meet their threshold." Another group encompassed families that no longer had children in the school system and did not feel obligated to pay additional taxes for those who were in the system. Self-interest groups sometimes appeared to comprise

a pocket of individuals not wanting to do vote for a bond issue. These same people probably would support tax issues that would personally benefit them. A final pocket of opposition was possible from voters who did not like the proposed plan or the location of the new facility. Resolving either or both of these issues could change these people into supporters of the bond issue.

A generalization the consultant did not agree with was that farmers almost always opposed property tax increases. The consultant contended, "I think farmers are sometimes misrepresented. They do not necessarily resist property taxes. I think they tend to be very benevolent citizens in a lot of ways." The consultant did not discourage rural schools from seeking to pass a bond issue just because the district wealth was largely comprised of agricultural property.

Informing the Public about the Bond Issue

Ensuring that information was simple and made sense to the average citizen were key ideas. When presenting information to the public, the consultant advised, "If you cannot say it in three minutes, you have lost the audience. That does not mean you do not do your homework. You have to know every single detail in specific...and understand all the intricacies of what you are doing." The consultant advocated having a "30-second speech" ready at all times, so that regardless of supporters were, they knew the three crucial ideas regarding the bond issue and were not caught off guard when asked a question. The consultant also urged that campaign workers know the

opposition and what their objections were so that appropriate responses could be developed.

Focus

Focusing on the need for the bond issue was first and foremost according to the consultant who said, "If the construction is for a new gym, or an addition to an existing building, understand how that affects kids. How is the education going to be improved in this district because we have this initiative?" The consultant did not advocate a focus in the dollars involved in the bond issue but warned that campaign leaders needed to be prepared to answer questions about funding and the impact on taxpayers. A final suggestion was to be able to explain how the proposed plan was a solution to problem areas and how other possible solutions were not as reasonable as the one which was being proposed.

Specific Strategies That Were Helpful

When requests were received by IASB consultants for information on successful strategies to utilize during a bond issue campaign, a packet of information was provided to them with references from the state and national levels where the ideas had been used. IASB consultants also referred school board members and superintendents to other districts that had passed bond issues, especially if there was a good demographic match between the planning district and the district that had passed the bond issue.

Unexpected Events

IASB consultants were not closely involved in local bond issues to have a good feel for any unexpected events that could have occurred during campaigns. However, in one county an election had been scheduled regarding the local option sales tax for schools, and on that same day, city and county-wide tax elections also were scheduled, which for some reason surprised the supporters of the school local option sales tax measure. Communication links apparently had broken down, as all parties agreed that staging all of the elections at the same time was not in the best interests of anyone. Interestingly, the local option sales tax measure for the schools passed, while the other two measures each failed.

Laws Affecting School Bond Issue Campaigns and Elections

The consultant cited the long-standing position of IASB that the law most significantly impacting school bond elections was the 60% supermajority requirement for passage of the bond issue. Another concern brought forth by the consultant was compliance with publication requirements, the time frame surrounding publications and notices related to board meetings and contacts with the county commissioner of elections. Confusion over these topics was the greatest area of concern, and the consultant said that someone had to keep on top of these requirements to avoid a procedural error.

Recommendations Regarding Laws

IASB, through the Delegate Assembly which was comprised of

representatives from each school board in Iowa, had a resolution for years which supported replacing the 60% supermajority law with a simple majority. In reviewing bond issue election data from 1990 to 1996, there was one year where 47% of the bond elections fell between 50% and 60% voter approval. These bond issues would have passed if there had been the simple majority passage in effect.

A second issue supported by IASB was to legally allow school districts and other entities to share in responsibilities for bonding and building for new facilities. Options could be created under which the city or county worked with the school to make common facilities available to the public, such as a community center. Between districts, sharing in the construction of new facilities could be the first step in the reorganization of the districts into a new district.

With respect to changing the mix for funding bond issues to incorporate other sources besides property taxes, the consultant stated that IASB did not have a specific position on including other funding such as the income surtax. IASB did have a position "...to not further erode the property tax base and to oppose any legislation which does that." The consultant surmised that anything which created options or flexibility in funding bond issues was consistent with the IASB position.

Other Recommendations

The consultant reemphasized the need to keep it simple, but also to keep it specific enough so there was an accountability tie back to what was being

spent. The more complex an issue, the greater the potential for opponents to pick it apart and to create side issues that could detract from the overall plan.

Another recommendation was to be aware of the financial situation within the district and the timing of the election. Official unspent balance computations came from the Department of Management in February or March, and if the district happened to have a negative unspent balance from the previous fiscal year, credibility in being able to financially handle the district could become an issue. An election at that point in time could have negative results just over the financial management issue.

In closing, the consultant encouraged leaders in districts which were considering a bond issue to study districts with similar demographic characteristics. Those features included a similar mix of agricultural, commercial, and residential property, a similar valuation per pupil, and a similar enrollment. Based on the historical information gleaned from these districts, the planning district could benefit from studying the strategies that resulted in successful bond issue elections in the comparable districts.

Interpretation of Findings

Need for New Facilities

The needs of the districts in the survey mirrored needs identified on the national level in the 1995 report by the General Accounting Office and state level as illustrated in information from the Iowa Department of Education in 1994. Aging buildings existed in all districts, which precipitated the bond issue

process and which was consistent across the state as reported by the consultants from the Department of Education (DE) and the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB). Additionally, the aging facilities prevented staff members from meeting the technological and educational programming needs of the students. In one district, a need to meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act as suggested by Wilson (1994) was key in pursuing the bond issue. The growth trend cited by the DE and IASB consultants as another factor which spurred the need for bond issues was not an overriding factor for the districts involved in the study.

Community Economic Factors

Interviewees in all of the districts maintained that bond issue support crossed all socioeconomic strata, even though regular contacts to IASB consultants indicated those who were promoting bond issues were concerned about addressing the needs of people at all socioeconomic levels. This fact contradicted several national studies, including those by Lane (1959), Dye and Zeigler (1970), Piele and Hall (1973), Bagin and Lefever (1971), and Judy and D'Amico (1998), which predicted voter support of bond issues along certain characteristics, including income level, age, whether or not the family had children in school, and education level attained. Farmers comprised a significant portion of the property owners in each district, but laborers in local industries were numerous in two districts. Two districts were considered to be bedroom communities for major cities, with many voters residing in the district

but working in the large city. One of the districts used the information to its advantage, taking the advice of the Iowa Association of School Boards (1997) to develop an understanding of the district voters and to solicit their input and involvement in the bond issue process.

Demographic Characteristics of the Community

Agriculture land accounted for much of the property wealth in all districts. When compared with districts across the state, one of the districts was considered to have a high assessed valuation per pupil, two were considered to have average assessed valuations per pupil, and one was regarded as having a low assessed valuation per pupil. As would have been expected, an analysis of tax rates provided similar information, with one district considered to have a high tax rate, two districts regarded as having average tax rates, and one district judged to have a low tax rate. Passage of the bond issues in districts with varying valuations and tax rates supported the contention of the DE consultant that a high tax rate did not mean that a bond issue could not be passed in a district.

Enrollment

Enrollment trends in the districts did not impact on the bond issue, except that in one district, the upward trend supported the need for new facilities due to classes being taught in hallways and in other non-classroom spaces. The enrollment in one district had stabilized over the years, and two districts were experiencing slightly declining enrollments. In the two districts with declining

enrollments, optimism pervaded among the interviewees that the new school facilities would attract people to the district either through taking up permanent residence in the district or through increasing numbers of open enrollment students into the district. Even though not stated as a factor, each of the districts in this study undoubtedly positioned itself to positively deal with the next round of school district reorganizations, an issue raised by the DE and IASB consultants.

Size of the Bond Issue

The size of each successful bond issue was near or at the maximum 5% of the assessed valuation of the district, as per Iowa law. The size of each bond issue also necessitated exceeding the \$2.70 tax levy per \$1,000 of valuation, which meant that all of the bond issues had two questions on the ballot: the first question on whether or not to approve the bond issue, and the second question on whether or not to authorize a tax levy of more than \$2.70 but less than \$4.05. Other than the usual questions about the reasons for such a large bond issue, which were few in each district, the size of the bond issue was not an obstacle to the passage of the bond issue. This finding was consistent with reports on successful school bond issues which were provided to the DE and IASB, and the finding supported the conclusions from the poll conducted by Rebuild America (1999) which found that citizens across the country regarded spending on infrastructure needs to be investments in the future. As reported earlier, Abrahamson (1998b) found that while the actual cost per square foot for

construction was not increasing, the total cost of construction was increasing due to more space allocated per pupil in classrooms. In one district, the size of the bond issue was a factor because it was larger than the earlier failed bond issue, and the prospects were that the cost would continue to increase with time due to increasing construction costs as more needs were identified, a factor which was brought out during the bond issue campaign.

Planning and Organization Associated with the Bond Issue Campaign

Each district had previously failed in bond issue elections. For this reason, some of the planning and organization strategies were used from the failed elections. In two of the districts a long-range planning committee evolved into the bond issue campaign committee. A shift in philosophy from campaign committee leadership during the bond issue campaign to leadership by the school board occurred in two districts between the most recent failed bond issue election and the successful campaign. As supported by Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971), this shift happened as a result of listening to the citizens who indicated they wanted school board members in the forefront.

Campaign Committee

Bagin and Lefever (1971), Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971), Settle (1997), and Crombie (1998) all reported in their studies the need for an effective citizens committee to provide the impetus for the bond issue. The campaign committee was a strength in each district and maintained a philosophy of significant community involvement throughout the bond issue campaign, a

strategy backed by the IASB and DE consultants. Each campaign committee was headed by a community patron, which was endorsed by Allen (1968) and Stathulis (1997), but board members served as formal committee members in only two districts. While each campaign committee had subcommittees as recommended by O'Brien (1994), Settle (1997), and Lode (1999) to which were delegated specific responsibilities, the structure was more formalized in three of the districts. Three of the superintendents tried to retain a subservient position as a background facilitator and organizer. The campaign committee organized the speakers for community presentations in three districts, but in the fourth district, board members and the superintendent were in the forefront giving presentations throughout the community in response to feedback from district patrons.

Leadership

The leadership roles in the districts were shaped by the previously failed bond issue elections, based on what had been learned from district patrons after the failures. The members of the school boards in the respective districts made certain that they accomplished what was legally required and were publicly united in support of the bond issue in each district, but the displays of support differed considerably. Two boards chose to remain totally in the background, save for attendance at public meetings. A third board also remained somewhat in the background, but individual members actively participated as campaign committee members. The fourth board undertook a

leadership role during the bond issue campaign, as members determined that district patrons wanted to hear directly from them and the superintendent regarding the details of the bond issue.

Three superintendents wanted to be certain that voters understood that the bond issue initiative came through the board with support and involvement from community patrons. In these districts, the superintendents described themselves as facilitators, liaisons between the board and the campaign committee, and organizers of the process. In the fourth district, the superintendent assumed a leadership role in response to patron feedback which indicated that people wanted the superintendent and board to move to the forefront, as they were the ones who had the best quality of information.

The committee chairpersons demonstrated considerable leadership during the bond issue campaign in three districts. They were considered to be the ones who kept subcommittees on task and moving according to the predetermined timeline. In the fourth district, the committee chairperson, and the entire campaign committee, moved into a supportive role, providing information and carrying out other functions associated with the campaign. The leaders during the campaign were the board members and the superintendent, which was purposely accomplished to meet the stated desires of community patrons.

Key Person

Among the four districts, two people were generally acknowledged as the

key people during the bond issue campaign. As supported by the DE consultant, the superintendent was the person who kept everyone focused on the ultimate goal, working behind the scenes as recommended by Stathulis (1997) to communicate information of all kinds to those involved in the process, keeping everyone aware of legal issues, and serving as a unifying force to bring consensus within groups. Following the advice of Allen (1968) and Crombie (1998), the committee chairperson was a community representative who charged with garnering community support and leading the campaign committee through all of the aspects of the campaign. The chairperson had to listen to patrons, communicate within the campaign committee and to the board, assure a quality level of community involvement, and evolve into the kind of leader which fit the board needed to best fit the desires of community patrons.

Role of the School Board

A common trait among the four school boards was unity in support of the bond issue, a position advocated by Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) and Henry (1994). The IASB consultant asserted that since board members represented the community in general and they tended to keep the best interests of the children in mind at all times, board unity was critical to a bond issue. Obviously boards from the districts involved in this study met their responsibility identified by Armstrong (1994) with respect to refining the details of the bond issue plans, but when the final decisions were made, the boards were united in support of the respective bond issues. In one district the board members stepped to the

forefront of the issue and served as presenters at public meetings, along with the superintendent. In another district, two board members actively served on the campaign committee. In addition to unity, the other major role assumed by the school board members was that of listeners to what the public was saying about plans and about the reasons for earlier bond issue failures. Listening to patrons helped shape what eventually became the successful bond issue plan.

Role of School Staff

Several studies cited earlier, including those by Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971), Henry (1994), and Armstrong (1994), promoted active involvement by staff members in the bond issue process, a premise also endorsed by the DE consultant. In general district staff members were involved in identifying the educational program needs to be met by the bond issue and were kept informed regarding progress on the bond issue on a regular basis. As was advocated by Stathulis (1997) and Cannon and Cannon (1997), efforts were made by either the campaign committee or by the superintendent to solicit internal support from the staff, so that when staff members were in less formal settings outside of school events or activities, the staff members would speak positively about the bond issue. Staff members helped during the bond issue campaign in each district, from putting up signs in yards to serving on the campaign committee in one district.

Citizens

Participation by community patrons on the respective campaign

committees was thought to be key to the success of each bond issue. As reported by Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971), O'Brien (1994), Henry (1994), and Stathulis (1997), community involvement in the bond issue equated with community ownership of the bond issue. The numbers of people involved varied among the districts, but the quality of the participation from those who were active in the bond issue campaign was important. As cited by the DE and IASB consultants, wide citizen involvement translated into better communication with all patrons in the district. Through involvement with the campaign committee and its associated subcommittees, citizens served as speakers, sponsored newspaper ads, and agreed to publicly have their names listed as supporters of bond issues.

Power Structures within the District

Leaders in three districts did not believe that formal power structures existed in the districts. However, there was agreement that pockets of influence existed, such as among farmers or patrons in a single district community. In one district, the members of the campaign committee were chosen because they were considered to comprise the power structure in that district, supporting the position of Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) who reported in their studies that within each community a structure existed which determined the kind of community that was desired by the general populace. The influence of this district group was monumental in promoting a positive bond issue campaign.

Supporters

Identification of bond issue supporters was important in determining campaign strategies, as reported by Edmund (1998). In each district supporters reported they were greatly influenced by the personal contact efforts made by those spearheading the bond issue campaign. Whether the contacts were accomplished one-on-one, or in small gatherings, the fact that the personal contacts were made greatly impacted on the outcome of the election, which was consistent with studies conducted by Lutz and Fields (1996) and Cannon and Cannon (1997). As a result, patrons expressed to district leaders that they were better informed about the bond issue and the need for it. Bond issue supporters acknowledged the fact that leaders were listening to the voters and responding accordingly in the plans and other ways. Organized displays of support came through arranged newspaper endorsements, advertisements, yard signs, other kinds of signs, and buttons for wearing, among others. More spontaneous manifestations of support included financial assistance to the campaign committee, letters to the editor, proposing ideas to leaders, and volunteering to assist in marketing the bond issue.

Opponents

While no formal opposition groups were evident during the successful bond issue campaigns, a major group that was addressed in each district was farmers, as they would bear a considerable portion of the tax increase through their property taxes. The IASB consultant cautioned school bond issue leaders

not to generalize that all farmers oppose property taxes, and local district officials made sure in their bond issue campaigns to address the concerns of farmers as well as they could. In their studies, Bagin and Lefever (1971) identified the ability to pay taxes as a source of opposition to bond issues. Henry (1994) warned about possible side issues that could create distractions during bond issue campaigns. In two districts sentiment existed that all attendance centers in the district should be located in one community rather than in multiple communities, an issue reported earlier from Edmund (1998). Following another issue reported by Edmund (1998), two districts had to work with families whose children attended private schools, either in the school district or in a neighboring district. In dealing with the opposing positions, district leaders believed the most important strategy was to involve them in determining what was needed in the district, even if it did not result in their support of the bond issue.

Informing the Public about the Bond Issue

Campaign committees in each district developed an informational brochure or flyer for public distribution and use at meetings. These pieces of information provided a common basis for presenters at meetings to use and to refer to during the presentation. Recommendations cited earlier by Crosby (1963), Henry (1994), Cannon and Cannon (1997), and Crombie (1998) paralleled the strategies of campaign committees, in that the information in the flyers was factual, based on the needs of the district, and explained what the

voters were receiving in the bond issue, information which the DE and IASB consultants indicated needed to be available in a form that was simple and made sense to anyone who read it.

As proposed by Settle (1997), the most significant media source was the newspaper, either the local in-district newspaper or the newspaper that served the district. In one district, the fact that the newspaper had changed ownership between the previously failed bond issue and the successful one was considered to have been significant, in that the new owner supported the bond issue. In only one district, because of its proximity to a large city, did radio and television coverage affect the bond issue campaign. Leaders in this district were cautious about endorsing television and radio as sources of support for the bond issue, especially in their coverage of campaign events and meetings.

Overwhelmingly, personal contacts in some form were the most effective methods of providing the public with information about the bond issue, as was summarized in earlier accounts from Stathulis (1997) and Crombie (1998). In one district, this meant going door-to-door to visit with voters about the need for the bond issue. In other districts, telephone campaigns provided the needed explanation about the bond issue and served as a method of determining the level of support for the bond issue. School leaders and the campaign chairpersons encouraged the use of small meetings or gatherings in homes as much more effective than public meetings conducted at the school. The small settings again gave the appearance of more personal contact with those

spearheading the bond issue campaign. As a result of the personal contacts, other methods of providing information about the bond issue evolved, including yard signs reminding people to vote "yes" on both ballot questions, campaign advertisers which contained factual information and lists and pictures of supporters, and letters to the newspaper about what the bond issue would do for educational opportunities in the district.

Focus

As was endorsed by Bagin and Lefever (1971) and the DE and IASB consultants, the common focus of information presented to the public was on students and how the proposed bond issue met their educational needs. Printed information concentrated on the facts of the bond issue such as cost, tax rates, and comparisons with neighboring school districts. While technology was part of the centerpiece in each bond issue, it was promoted as a tool to help better meet the needs of students.

Specific Strategies That Were Helpful

The most important strategy used in all districts and emphasized by the DE consultant involved communication in some form. Listening to patrons provided the adjustments needed to develop a plan that voters would support. Consistent with recommendations from Stathulis (1997) and Crombie (1998), personal contacts gave voters a feeling of being better informed about the issue. Researchers such as Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971), O'Brien (1994), Henry (1994), and Stathulis (1997) advanced broad-based participation by

community patrons in the bond issue process. Involvement of large numbers of community patrons in the districts of this study engendered considerable support for the bond issue, as the sphere of influence of these key supporters helped build a base of voter support that was vital to the success of the bond issue. Other successful strategies employed in the successful bond issue campaigns and endorsed by Crosby (1963), Boss and Thomas (1968), Allen (1968), Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971), and Henry (1994), included telephone campaigns, the use of signs in some form, public endorsements for the bond issue, newspaper letters supporting the issue, and operating an honest, up front campaign with nothing hidden from the public. As would be expected, the effectiveness of any strategy varied among the districts and largely depended on the feedback that campaign leaders were receiving from the constituents in the district.

Unexpected Events

Very few unexpected events occurred during the bond issue campaigns, perhaps partially due to the fact that there had been previous attempts to pass bond issues in each district. In one district, the new local option sales tax impacted on the outcome, as district leaders could plan on how to use the bond funds for facilities, while the sales tax revenues allowed them to plan how to furnish the new facilities. Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) reported in their studies that trying to change the minds of voters who were opposed to a bond issue was a waste of time. Contrary to this position, in one district the

perception existed that many voters changed positions to support the successful bond issue. The consensus in this district was that getting better information to the voters in a more personal manner was the reason for the shift.

Laws Affecting School Bond Issue Campaigns and Elections

Several laws affected all of the districts during the bond issue process. Consistent with assertions from IASB, all four school districts had been affected by the 60% supermajority law. At least one previous bond election in each district had received more than 50% voter approval but had fallen short of the necessary 60% supermajority.

Leaders in each district were cognizant of the campaign ethics laws and made extensive efforts to remain in compliance with these laws. As Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971) reported, everyone associated with a bond issue campaign needed to "bend over backwards" to comply with legal requirements. Each district also was affected by the requirement to have two ballot questions since the \$2.70 tax rate was exceeded. In each district, the percentage of votes in favor of exceeding the \$2.70 tax rate was slightly less than the percentage of votes in favor of the bond issue. The fact that the only method available to fund bond issues was through property taxes impacted each district to a degree, as each district was considered to be rural in nature. In two districts, the limitation on the size of the bond issue to 5% of the assessed valuation left school leaders believing they still were not meeting the educational needs of students as well as they should have been. The Americans with Disabilities Act provided much

of the stimulus for the bond issue, based on existing needs within the district which were likely to remain for 10 or more years.

Recommendations Regarding Laws

One law that all interviewees supported changing was the mandate for two ballot questions when the tax rate levy exceeded \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Reasons for supporting the change ranged from the confusion created by the second question to the perception that if voters supported the bond issue as it was presented, that support should carry through the election up to the \$4.05 tax rate maximum which could not be surpassed. The DE consultant indicated that revisiting the law could be in order, as it had been in place for over 30 years, and many economic changes and other changes had occurred during that time period.

The interviewees were divided on whether or not to change the 60% supermajority of the vote needed for passage of the bond issue and to exceed the \$2.70 tax rate. As stated by the IASB consultant, the IASB Delegate Assembly long had called for changing the bond issue passage from a supermajority to a simple majority. Support from district interviewees for changing the supermajority to a simple majority was more prevalent if funding other than property taxes was included in the mix to pay for the bond issue. Some of the adamant supporters of the supermajority felt that passage of the bond issue by that margin left no doubt that there was significant community support for the plan and the bond issue, whereas a simple majority could allow

too many people to second guess the outcome and possibly cause more disruption to the overall educational program as time went on.

Other Recommendations

In providing summation recommendations, the reports of Bagin and Lefever (1971), Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971), O'Brien (1994), Henry (1994), Settle (1997), Stathulis (1997), and Crombie (1998) were echoed in support of extensive community involvement throughout the bond issue process. As expected, communication again surfaced from the district interviewees and the DE consultant as the key to success of the bond issue. Concordant with strategies advocated by Lutz and Fields (1996) and Cannon and Cannon (1997), this meant listening to what voters were saying, making personal contacts with voters in some manner, and providing information to anyone whenever it was desired. As one interviewee indicated, the voters knew the plan they wanted, but it took almost 25 years for that message to be heard. Another important factor was to have a high level of trust among the leaders and the voters. Contributing to the trust was provision of factual information to voters in written and spoken formats as sanctioned in studies by Crosby (1963), Bagin and Lefever (1971), Henry (1994), and Crombie (1998), along with concerted efforts to make personal contacts with voters during the course of the bond issue campaign either in one-on-one settings or in small group settings. The strategies employed during the campaign reflected on the leadership that designed the overall plan for the bond issue campaign, and strong leadership

was cited many times as vital to the success of the bond issue.

What Interviewees Would Change or Keep the Same in Future Bond Issues

Successful bond elections made the interviewees feel they had found the best way to approach a bond issue for their respective districts. As one interviewee indicated, it was possible that one district could duplicate the bond issue campaign methods which were used successfully in another district, yet the bond issue would fail. The key was to assimilate as much information as possible about what worked in other districts, thoroughly understand one's local district patrons, and tailor bond issue strategies to the unique needs within the local district.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

As citizens prepared to enter the 21st century, it seemed unfathomable that many students were receiving their education in facilities that were constructed in the 19th century or in the early part of the 20th century. Yet, those were the circumstances that existed for many students in the United States and in Iowa. Based upon studies by the General Accounting Office, surveys by private organizations such as Rebuild America, and data from state organizations such as the Iowa Department of Education, the need for infrastructure investment was well documented. Aging facilities contributed to a myriad of problems which included poor ventilation in classrooms, energy inefficiency, inability to provide quality access to technology, and a reliance on teaching methodology which was mostly auditory in nature and thereby not meeting the needs of almost two-thirds of the students who are visual or kinesthetic learners. While several state governments recognized the need to address school infrastructure needs, leaders in Iowa continued to leave that responsibility with local school districts and with only one method, property taxes, of funding bonds to pay for new construction. Local school districts responded to the challenge, and a considerable increase in bond issue activity occurred in the latter portion of the 1990s.

During the period covered in this study from January, 1996, through

August, 1998, there were more successful bond issue elections than failures, albeit not by an overwhelming margin. However, the fact that bond issues were being passed more frequently indicated that a wealth of information was available from those districts that had successful bond issue elections, but to secure the information, it was necessary to contact personnel in individual districts to learn what had been done to lead to positive bond election results. This study was accomplished to assimilate information from four school districts that achieved successful bond election results, to determine if common strategies were employed which led to the successful bond election, and to identify laws or policies that impacted on bond issue campaigns and elections.

Qualitative research methodology allowed for the interviewees in each district to tell the success story of the respective bond issue. Three interviews were conducted in each of the four school districts, and the interviewees included the superintendent, the board president at the time of the successful bond election or most knowledgeable board member about the process at the time of the election, and the chairperson of the campaign committee. The opportunity was provided for interviewing others who were proficient in understanding the overall bond issue process, but in each district the superintendent indicated that while other patrons were highly involved in various aspects of the bond issue process, the selected individuals were the ones with the best understanding of everything associated with the successful bond issue, from planning through the election. In addition to the school district

participants, individuals from organizations that work with school districts on bond issues were interviewed, and their input was used to corroborate data from the district representatives. The research focused on predetermined components which could impact on bond issue elections including socioeconomic status of the district, property valuation, tax rates, student enrollment, size of the bond issue, the campaign committee, bond issue leadership, community involvement, strategies used during the bond issue campaign, laws impacting on bond issues, and recommendations for changes to laws. Information on the components was acquired by using an established set of questions, and clarifying questions were asked as necessary to better define the information shared by the interviewee. The humanness which emanated from the participants provided data that was rich in quality. For those who worked on bond issues, quality information was more significant than quantifiable information, because quality provided for explanations of how people worked with other people to achieve a common goal.

Conclusions

Based upon the data gathered for this study, several conclusions were derived:

Conclusion 1: The voices of district patrons had to be heard, which required that school leaders provide many forums at which patrons could share thought and ideas and that school leaders carefully listen to what the patrons are saying.

One campaign chairperson pointed out that it took 25 years and 10 failed bond issues for school and community leaders to hear what patrons were telling them. Considerable time and energy were wasted in trying to convince patrons they really wanted something other than what they were telling the leaders. Finally, when a newly elected board member explained what was happening in the communities, school leaders started listening to the patrons in a different manner. The result was a totally new plan in a different location than had been proposed in previously failed bond issues, and the voters overwhelmingly approved the plan and the funding for the plan in the election. The message was applicable to all school leaders: listen to what patrons actually were saying, not to what school leaders wanted to hear patrons say.

Conclusion 2: Planning was necessary from the early stages through the election.

Someone involved with the bond issue had to have a vision of how the total process would occur. The grand scheme was reduced to planning for certain activities to occur by a given time or within a specific time frame. A major component to planning was the selection of the campaign committee chairperson, as this person also had to have a vision for what was to happen. The successful bond issues evidenced that quality planning throughout the entire process yielded positive election results.

Conclusion 3: The need for the bond issue had to be clearly identified.

Voters deserved to know the reasons for proposing a bond issue. In the

districts included in this study, aging buildings were clearly identified as either deteriorating or limiting what could be done in the educational program to better meet student needs. Part of the identification process included listening to district patrons, as described earlier. One committee chairperson stated that the needs identified by school leaders and the needs identified by district patrons might not match, but that voters tended to support the plans which were based on the needs identified by patrons.

Conclusion 4: Members of the school board had to be united in support of the proposed bond issue.

Even though the public perception was that school board members naturally would support a proposed bond issue because that was their job, unified support by the board was deemed essential to the success of the bond issue. One district, in a prior election, had a board member who had split ranks and spoke out against the bond issue. The superintendent and committee chairperson felt the actions of that individual board member caused the election to fail. A unified board did not mean that ideas were not shared and discussed in meetings. It meant that when board members left the meeting, everyone was united in support of the agreed-upon outcome of the meeting, and that everyone agreed to promote the outcome to the public.

Conclusion 5: Strong, effective leadership was needed to result in a successful bond issue election.

Leadership came in several forms, but one person was responsible for

bringing everyone's vision together, and that person was the superintendent. The superintendent was the person responsible for leading the board through the process of hiring an architect and for creating the plan that would be proposed to voters. At the appropriate times, the superintendent gathered pertinent information and brought together other necessary experts such as the bond attorney, the bond financial advisor, and the project manager. The superintendent kept board members focused on the ultimate goal of passing the bond issue, helping board members work through issues to reach consensus so that whenever board members departed from a meeting, they were unified in support of the outcome from the meeting. The superintendent worked with board members in selecting the leaders and the members of the campaign committee and served as a communication liaison between the board and the campaign committee throughout the bond issue campaign. Contacting the Campaign Ethics Office and seeking other legal advice was the responsibility of the superintendent. Even if the superintendent did not serve as a presenter at meetings, attendance at meetings was necessary to provide information as needed or to answer questions to which the presenter was not able to respond. In general, descriptors such as facilitator, organizer, liaison, and enabler characterized the superintendent, and the superintendent was the person who was most likely to be held accountable for almost every matter associated with the bond issue. Without a superintendent who was willing to put forth the necessary effort into the bond issue, a successful bond issue was not likely to

result. In assuming the leadership role, the superintendent needed the support of the school board and the cooperation of the campaign committee. In reality, a weak link in any of these three players, the superintendent, the school board, or the campaign committee, was likely to cause the failure of the bond issue.

Conclusion 6: A campaign committee with effective involvement of community members was vital in promoting the bond issue.

The number of community members involved in the campaign committee was not the key. The main factor for the campaign committee was the overall effectiveness of those who were involved in causing the bond issue to be passed. One committee chairperson stated that approximately 20 comprised the committee, while in another district, around 200 people were considered to have played some role in the campaign committee. Obviously, the more people who were effectively involved in the campaign committee as supporters of the bond issue, the more district patrons were influenced by the supporters and potentially turned into supporters of the bond issue. It was important to have responsibilities for committee members well defined, so that their involvement was more than just tokenism.

Conclusion 7: Identification of "yes" voters was important to the overall success of the bond issue.

Telephone campaigns or surveys in either the successful bond issue campaign or in a previous bond issue provided information as to who supporters of the bond issue were, who opponents were, and who was

undecided or was able to be swayed with better information to support a bond issue. In most cases, the "yes" voters were solicited to publicly endorse the bond issue in some way and to assist in providing undecided or sway voters with quality information that helped them become "yes" voters.

Conclusion 8: Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Quality communication before, during, and after the bond issue was emphasized many times. Personal communication was the most effective method of communication, but it was quite time consuming. The interviewees reiterated many times the need to be willing to meet individually with people when necessary, to be willing to go to the homes of patrons, to meet with community organizations, and to speak at any and all gatherings where people allowed them to present information. Another important method of communication was the newspaper. One interviewee concluded that people tended to believe what they read, even if what they were reading contained inaccurate information. The interviewees in districts with local newspapers agreed that the support of the local newspaper positively impacted on the election outcome. The final communication recommendation was to be honest in what was presented to patrons. Facts, information based on needs, and descriptions of what was to be better as a result of the bond issue provided voters with solid information on which to make their decision. This type of communication also made it difficult for opponents to discredit information, thereby reducing the impact of opposition positions.

Conclusion 9: Bond issue campaign leaders utilized multiple strategies.

Part of the planning process was understanding the kinds of activities to which community patrons responded in a positive manner. In addition to the strategies already cited, the following were utilized across the districts in the study: brochures or flyers were disseminated to district patrons through the mail and at meetings; information in the brochures focused on students, facts associated with the bond issue, and the reasons for proposing the bond issue; staff members had to be involved in helping determine the educational needs to be met through the bond issue, and their support was necessary to set a positive tone regarding the bond issue; and the campaign had to be positive in nature so as not to turn off voters by regularly reminding them of everything that was wrong with the schools.

Conclusion 10: Regardless of what district leaders and voters wanted to have in place for laws, they still had to abide by the laws in effect at the time of the bond issue. One person was responsible for staying abreast of laws and policies that impacted on the bond issue.

Through the bond issue campaign, one of the responsibilities of campaign leaders was to educate voters on the laws that applied to the bond issue and to explain how those laws impacted on the specific plan proposed to the voters. One interviewee related to concerned patrons that everyone agreed that financing the bond issue with a mix of funds besides property taxes was a positive idea, but the laws in existence at the time of the bond issue did not

allow for any other funding source. Similar complications arose with respect to educating voters about the need to vote "yes" on both ballot questions, so that the bond issue was passed, along with the funding necessary to construct what was proposed in the plan. Perhaps the final laws affecting all districts were the campaign ethics laws, where a violation had the potential to overturn the election results. In all cases, one person assumed responsibility for oversight of legal issues, and that was the superintendent. Certain responsibilities associated with the laws were delegated to others, such as one campaign committee member was responsible for keeping track of finances and reporting them according to the law. However, in the final analysis, the superintendent was the one who answered questions, found the answers to questions, or contacted legal experts who rendered advice on the questions.

Implications

Successful school bond issues made all participants feel a true sense of accomplishment. However, in school districts with more than one community, the potential was high for a split between the communities. One reason was that patrons in the community with the high school attendance center, which usually was located in the larger community, preferred to have all district students in one town, especially if there also was an elementary attendance center in that town. Those divisions may not heal for years, if ever. Likewise, an efficient solution to financial problems may have been to consolidate attendance centers when a bond issue was proposed, but the political reality

may have been to operate all centers in order to satisfy a vocal minority of patrons and to pass the bond issue.

Even though Iowa was in a lull period with respect to reorganization, posturing for future reorganizational efforts was occurring. Communities did not want to lose their schools, and rather than risk losing their schools in the near future, school leaders provided voters with a plan which they felt would ensure maintaining the school system into the future. Even though the Department of Education consultant thought that discussions were occurring, it appeared to be even stronger than just discussion. Such a trend was likely to continue for several years until finances became such that a new round of reorganizations would occur as smaller school districts were unable to operate. Another factor that may influence the speed with the next round of reorganizations may occur was HF 2272, the accountability law passed in the 1998 General Assembly, which required each school district to develop a comprehensive school improvement plan. If aging facilities were deemed to be part of the reason that students were not performing as well as desired, or that the facilities were not adequate to deliver the kind of educational program to meet school improvement standards, it may be possible that school districts could be forced to combine with a neighboring district with modern, well-equipped facilities, where students would receive the educational programming offerings deemed to be necessary to result in the desired level of student achievement. This would not be the first time such a pattern had occurred in Iowa. Accreditation

standards for Iowa schools were implemented on October 1, 1988, which precipitated sharing of teachers and students among several school districts across the state. In many cases, the sharing led to reorganization between the participating districts, a process which was fostered by legislators in the form of financial incentives for districts to reorganize by July 1, 1993. Was it possible that the HF 2272 requirements were intentionally designed to couple with aging facilities and declining population in almost 90% of the counties in Iowa to result another round of school district reorganizations?

The final implication learned from the study dealt with financing of bond issues. Discussions had been held and continued to be held over whether or not to allow income surtax to be used for bonded indebtedness. These discussions often were associated with lowering the 60% supermajority requirement to a simple majority. The reality seemed to be that until the Moody's ratings and bond interest rate issues were resolved, the income surtax was not going to be a factor in financing school bond issues. Another facet of the financing question was the level of involvement in financing school infrastructure needs from the state level. Legislators thought passing the local option sales tax in 1998 would address some infrastructure needs. The potential seemed to exist for success in passing the local option sales tax in counties with major shopping centers. In counties with a sparse population and a strongly rural economy, the local option sales tax was not going to allow school districts to significantly address infrastructure needs. Interestingly, the

trade of property tax relief votes for the local option sales tax votes in the 1998 General Assembly may jeopardize the pride that Iowa leaders had in equitably financing education. Legislators may be forced to revisit the local option sales tax law, making it a statewide tax and proportioning the proceeds back to local school districts under a student-based distribution formula. Use of such funds to buy down the interest on bonds could help local school districts pass needed bond issues.

Recommendations Related to Laws

Based on the findings in this study, recommendations were brought forth for consideration by legislators to contemplate when searching for ways to address the infrastructure needs of Iowa schools.

First, discussion was needed with respect to changes in the method of funding bond issues. Many implications could result from changing the funding mix, and the impact of such a change on Moody's ratings and bond interest rates could outweigh any advantages derived from a new funding mixture. The most likely source of a new funding mix was the income surtax, which was also available for use in funding an Instructional Support Program and the voter-approved Physical Plant and Equipment Levy. For ratings purposes, income surtax was considered as an unstable source of funding, and a maximum income surtax of 20% total for all funds had the potential to limit effective use of the income surtax to pay for bond issues. A second possible funding source was the local option sales tax, but the newness of that source of funding at the

time of this study made understanding all of the potential ramifications impossible. As with the income surtax, use of the local option sales tax was likely to impact on Moody's ratings and bond interest rates. The final aspect with respect to changing the funding source mix was to review the 60% supermajority requirement for passage of the bond issue. If other funding sources became available for use in funding bond issues, legislators could lower the passage requirement to a simple majority, since the tax burden could be spread over a broader base.

Second, legislators needed to revisit the laws related to the need for two ballot questions when the size of a bond issue necessitated a tax levy in excess of \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, up to a maximum tax rate of \$4.05. The \$2.70 tax rate had been in law at least since the 1960s, and 30 years of changes occurred in construction and other matters related to bond issues. The sentiment among the majority of participants in the study was that if voters approved the plan, that was sufficient to approve funding of the plan.

Recommendations for Further Research

As with any study, several unanswered questions remained which offered opportunities for further research regarding successful bond issues. With that in mind, several recommendations for further research were proposed.

First, by the random selection of the districts based on the identified variables, the four districts included in the study represented a somewhat homogeneous sampling, as the district were regarded as mid-sized rural

districts for Iowa. Similar research could be accomplished with urban schools, large rural schools, and small schools. Commonalities across all sizes of school districts undoubtedly would yield powerful information for use in school districts of all sizes in which bond issues were being contemplated.

Second, this study was focused only on school districts that achieved successful bond elections. Further research on school districts that have failed to pass bond issues could be helpful in determining if certain common strategies were not used or if other common factors existed that resulted in defeat of a bond issue. Another consideration in this research could be the impact that outside forces had on the election, such as other non-school elections being conducted on the same day.

Third, the school districts in the study had either stable or slightly declining enrollment, and all of the districts had aging facilities. A study of school districts in growth patterns, whose needs were for additional space and not based on aging facilities, could yield a different set of common strategies that were employed to garner support for a bond issue.

Fourth, as was discovered during the research phase of the study, all of the districts had experienced failed bond issues in the recent past. Research of school districts that passed a bond issue on the first attempt could provide comparative data on the reasons for the success in those districts on the first bond issue attempt.

Fifth, comparative research of states with the simple majority vote

required for passage of a bond issue, as compared with the 60% supermajority required in Iowa, could provide legislators with data on whether or not a significant difference existed in election outcomes.

Sixth, research encompassing districts which failed a bond issue but eventually passed one could yield results to explain the intervening factors that eventually resulted in the successful bond issue election. Of particular interest would be changes to the plan, increases or decreases in the proposed cost, whether or not two ballot questions were necessary for all elections, changes in board membership, changes in district leadership with a new superintendent, and demographic changes which may have changed the financial picture in the district.

Seventh, research looking in depth at demographic factors where bond issues have passed or failed could provide information about strategies that were or were not successful when meeting the needs of the variously affected groups. Topics of particular interest may be the assessed valuation, whether the valuation was based in agriculture or industry, a pattern of significantly increasing or decreasing enrollment, and socioeconomic data.

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SCHOOL BOND ELECTIONS IN IOWA:
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THAT INFLUENCE OUTCOMES

A Dissertation
Presented to
the School of Education
Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

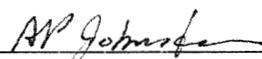
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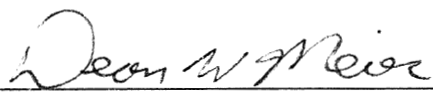
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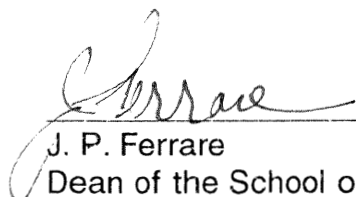
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SCHOOL BOND ELECTIONS IN IOWA: AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS, STRATEGIES, AND POLICIES THAT INFLUENCE OUTCOMES

An abstract of a Dissertation by
Kevin C. Brummer
May 1999
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The Problem. The problem of this study was to identify and analyze: (a) selected social, political, and economic factors, (b) successful strategies used in school bond elections, and (c) influential policies related to school bond elections.

Procedures. Questions were developed, and interviews were conducted with a school board member, the superintendent, and the citizens' committee chairperson in four school districts chosen on the basis of the cost of the bond issue per student and the percentage the bond issue represented of the assessed valuation of the district, along with consultants from the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Association of School Boards.

Findings. Aging buildings and the inability to present the educational program were the major reasons for bond issues. Listening to the voters, the campaign committee, the level of community involvement, and a unified school board were crucial to passing the bond issue. The most successful strategy was communicating with the public in as many ways as possible. Laws impacting bond issues were property tax funding for bond issues, the campaign ethics laws, and two ballot questions for exceeding a tax rate of \$2.70.

Conclusions. Ten conclusions were drawn, including: the importance of listening, the need for vigorous leadership, and the necessity for well-coordinated plans.

Recommendations. Legislators could consider changing the method of funding bond issues and changing the laws requiring two ballot questions when the proposed tax levy exceeded \$2.70. Additional research could be done to study strategies in school districts of other sizes, school districts that have failed to pass bond issues, school districts in growth patterns, school districts that passed a bond issue on the first attempt, and states with the simple majority vote required for passage.

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